

RAZZORCAKE

#60

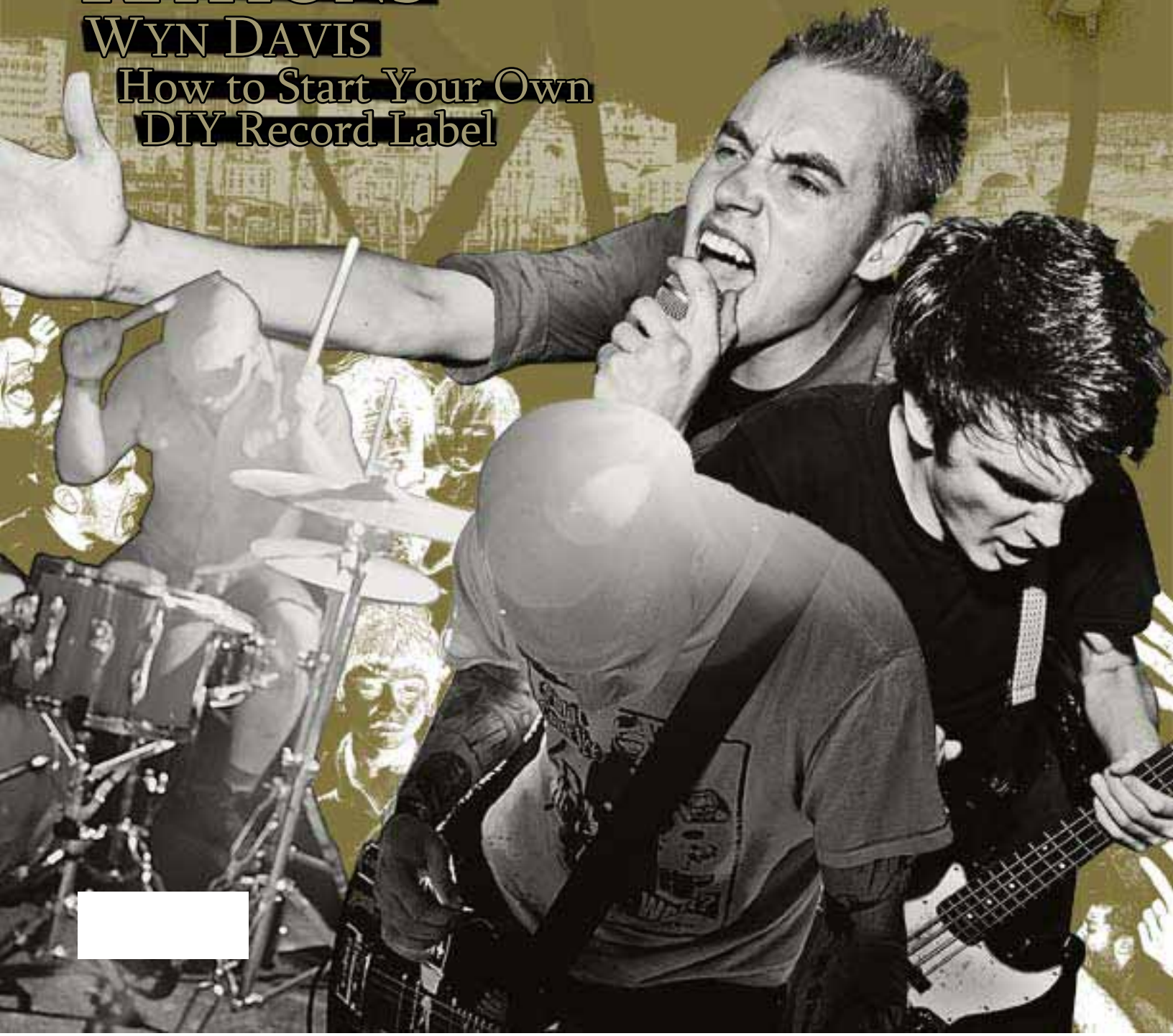
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RATIONS

WYN DAVIS

How to Start Your Own
DIY Record Label



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Thank you.

—Todd Taylor

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THAT'S
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Gold-painted Shovels

If I'd known about the blues, I'd've been humming a Son House song. If I'd known about punk then, I'd've been singing "World up My Ass" by the Circle Jerks. I was just a kid. It was probably Huey Lewis, Weird Al Yankovic, or something off the *Pac Man Fever* soundtrack since I owned exactly those three cassettes. It was well over one hundred degrees. We were shoveling granite rocks. Little ones, but big piles of them. It's not like we were on a chain gang, but it was hot outside of the Elks Lodge. I think the grass had just been removed, Visqueen was laid down, and we were spreading out the rocks. It's called xeriscaping now. We just called them rock gardens.

I was a boy scout and our troop was sponsored by the Elks Lodge. They let us use their conference room for our meetings. We'd repay them with volunteer work. Being a boy scout is one of the most un-punk things to admit. Conformity. Uniforms. Volunteerism. Quasi-militarism. Not cool to homosexuals. I started scouts when I was young. I liked camping, tying knots, hiking, learning how to survive outdoors. It was a good time.

The Elks—I'm still not sure what Elks promote—weren't like the more self-explanatory Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion or the more mysterious-sounding Free Masons. From what I could tell, they were mostly old guys who'd smoke, drink discounted drinks, and gamble in the bar across the hall from our meeting room. Sometimes, they'd mistakenly take a left instead of a right, look confused when they saw a bunch of boys in olive green pants and beige shirts, squint at us, and then it was back out of the room. The only other time I saw them outside of the building was during the Fourth of July parades. They weren't as cool as the Shriners in their

go karts doing tricks. They just had those foldable hats where they'd stick miscellaneous pins, like military pins next to Snoopy pins.

We'd been shoveling rocks all day. A landscaping company had left mounds the length of the property. We were slowly spreading them all out. At about noon, two of the old Elks guys came outside, squinted at the sun, laid down some newspaper on the sidewalk near the entrance, produced two pointy-tipped shovels, then spray painted the blades gold. They came back out a couple hours later, turned the shovels over, and spray painted the other side of the blades.

By the end of the day, we were pooped and stopped for a water break. We had two or three more mounds to go. The two old men, accompanied by a third with a camera, walked to one of the remaining mounds, stuck their gold-painted shovel blades into the gravel, and posed for the camera. Flash. Then thumb cranking on a disposable camera a couple more times until the third guy gave them the thumbs up.

"I think we got it."

The three of them didn't talk to any of the scouts. After they finished, they walked directly back into the Elks bar, shovels and all. I thought it was funny that they had the wrong type of shovels. They'd need square-tipped blades if they really wanted to move some gravel.

A week later, when I opened up the local paper, I saw the photo of the two old men and their gold-bladed shovels with the caption, "Local Elks help Boy Scout troop with rock garden." I realized that they had no intention of moving any gravel... but they got exactly what they were after.

—Todd Taylor

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"If Mr. Mom was a documentary, I'd be your Michael Keaton, you're my Terri Garr... can I get a really cool monkey?"

—Too Many Daves, "Dudes Room"

This issue is dedicated to the memories of Jess The Mess and Leslie Nielsen.



Cali, 1995-2010. A puppy till your final days. Thanks for being a true friend.

THANK YOU: From the verdant shores of Portland, Oregon, to the wind-swept deserts of Istanbul, Daryl Gussin rocked the Red Dons cover and Mateus Mondini brung the photos; Quixotian poo vapor thanks to Brad Beshaw for the illo. in Sean's column; Jolly Green Giant's prosthetic leg thanks to Bill Pinkel for his illo. in Jim's column; Crows-in-a-void thanks for Steve Larder for his illo. in Amy's column; Shit'd just be black and white without it thanks to Nation of Amanda for her water coloring Mitch's column; Just image red where it says "red" and we'd have a color page thanks to Danny Martin for his illo. in Nardwuar's column; Go to Norb's for slashed prices on magnets thanks to Ryan Gelatin for his illo.; Eternal touchdown of the soul thanks to Dan "The Eggman" Eggert for his Rhythm Chicken photo; "First dibs on the Ramonkeys shirt. I'm a large," thanks to Jason Armadillo for his illo. in Dale's column; Does divine intervention trump parking signs? I do believe you are correct, thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Gary's column; I wish good people were immortal, part I, thanks to Jennifer Whiteford and Chris Peigler for the Ari Up remembrance and photos; Raising standards and documenting the ever-loving hell out of a relevant topic thanks to Kevin Dunn for his great work on "How to Start Your Own DIY Record Label"; In a world where vacuum tubes and vinyl records walk and talk, of course the records smoke and 40 ounces drink thimble-sized bottles named "beer" thanks to Craig Horky for his illustrations; I think I see the machine that goes "bing" in the background thanks to Ryan Leach, Alejandro Larin Baranda, and Lauren Measure for the interview, illustrations, and layout of Wyn Davis; "Can you give me a wee more Econochrist in the monitor and wee less Born Against? ...Perfect" thanks to Fat Rich Warwick, Joann Donnelly, Richie Tuffini, and Keith Rosson for all their help with the Rations interview; Okay, you're sayin', "Man, I miss the Observers. I wonder what Doug's doing today?" Blowin' minds worldwide thanks to Dave Williams and Mateus Mondini for the Red Dons interview and photos; I wish good people were immortal, part II thanks to Chris Peigler and Dan Monick for the Jesse Rich obituary; Here's to music and zines that aren't exclusively made for, played on, and will get lost or die totally on an electronic device thanks the following intrepid reviewers for issue #60's cycle: Paul J. Comeau, Jessica T., Corinne, Garrett Barnwell, Lauren Trout, Rene Navarro, Sal Lucci, MP Johnson, Ian Wise, Ryan Leach, Joe Evans III, Juan Espinosa, Kurt Morris, Keith Rosson, CT Terry, Bryan Static, Craven Rock, Aphid Peewit, Reyana Ali, Jeff Proctor, Ty Stranglehold, Matt Average, Adrian Salas, Vincent Battilana, Dawnofthedeaddll, Speedway Randy, Sean Koepenick, Art Ettinger, Billups Allen, Dave Williams, Jimmy Alvarado, Norb, Andy Conway, Steve Hart, and Katie Dunne; You can now search over 18,000 reviews on razorcake.org and you can thank Chris Shireman for that. We do.; Jake Shut threw a benefit for us in Minneapolis, then sent us a check. Thanks, Jake.; Chris Baxter helps give all the photos more pop with his Photoshopping wizard sash; Lots of folks have crossed our threshold, rolled up their sleeves, and helped us out at HQ or on the interwebs: MC Stevens, Joshua Ian Robles, Josh Rosa, Ever Velazquez, Joe Dana, Candice Tobin, Hannah Israel, Juan Thirty Eight, Susan Chung, Garrett Barnwell, Matt Braun, Adrian Salas, Matt Average, Don Seki, and Jeff Proctor.

NORMALIZING.....



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"Money is the measure of our distrust." -G.B. Edwards, *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page*



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A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

“Sean, what do you consider to be the greatest dick and poop moments in literature?”

THE PENORECTAL GUIDE TO GREAT LITERATURE

I get some odd responses from people when I tell them I teach literature at a state university. Sometimes they'll wince and expect me to start professing, because professors have been known to do that. Or they'll tell me they better watch their grammar, because apparently they have me mistaken for their seventh grade language arts teacher. Or they'll just say, "Dude, that's not punk." Because it's not. But never, not once, has anyone asked me the burning question that only someone like me, who has spent decades studying and teaching in the field, can answer. And since I know everyone is curious about it yet afraid to ask, and since I do have the very specific expertise needed to properly solve this mystery, I'll let you ask me the question telepathically. "Sean," you'll ask me, because you want the answer here in writing, "what do you consider to be the greatest dick and poop moments in literature?"

Well, that is an intriguing question. I assume that you want the dick and poop moments that come from really high-brow or intellectual authors so that, for instance, if someone is talking about Shakespeare, you can say, "I think he's at his best when he's talking about hookers." This is a perfectly valid thing to say and a good place to begin answering your question.

5. Groping for Trout

I'm not much of a Shakespeare fan. I've read or seen about a dozen of his plays. I understand what's going on and what's being communicated, more or less. I respect the talent. I just don't enjoy it. Still, Shakespeare has his great lines. My favorite is in the play *Measure for Measure*. Maybe you don't know the play and surely you don't want me to summarize it, so I'll give you highlights. In one of the first scenes in the play, three characters hang out with the madam of a brothel and joke about the venereal diseases they bought off her. Several of the subsequent scenes are taken up by a major character who is trying to have sex with a nun.

This is a Shakespeare I can get into. Hamlet—the whiny rich guy who doesn't know whether or not to kill himself—is nowhere to be seen. Instead, I get hookers and a guy trying to fuck a nun. And I get to learn that "groping for trouts in a peculiar river" is Shakespearean slang for the act of having sex with a woman you shouldn't have sex with.

Now that you know this slang, you can quote Shakespeare next time you see your

buddy introducing himself to a woman after the bartender has hollered last call. You can say, "Looks like ol' Art Fuentes is groping for trouts in a peculiar river."

4. Woman Has No Beard

You've probably had an assignment to read *The Canterbury Tales* at one point or another. If you're like some of my better students, you read the Spark Notes summary instead (as opposed to my worse students, who didn't even bother to do that). But if you did that, you missed out on the best part of *The Miller's Tale*.

The Miller's Tale is about an old carpenter who marries a young girl—probably against her will—and she plots to have an affair with the young student who is renting a room from them. The student convinces the carpenter that a second flood, like the one that Noah survived with his ark, is coming and that the carpenter should build three boats and hang them from the ceiling in the barn. The carpenter does this. All three of them climb into the boats to wait for the flood. Only the student and the wife know that no flood is on the way. They climb down from the boats and go have a night full of sex while the carpenter sleeps. That much you probably know from Wikipedia. There's also a stalker who's trying to have his own night of sex with the wife. In the morning, he comes to her bedroom window to woo her. She tells him to close his eyes and she'll let him kiss her. He closes his eyes. In the words of Chaucer, "But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers/Ful savourly, er he were war of this. /Abak he stirte, and thoughte it was amys/ For wel he wiste a womman hath no berd." In other words, he kissed her naked ass—and not just a peck, but a full kiss that he savored—then thought to himself, strange, why does this woman have a beard?

Of course, more stuff happens after he kisses the wife's hairy ass. He gets a red-hot shovel and smacks the student in the ass with it. The student cries for water. The carpenter thinks this means that the flood has come, cuts loose his boat, falls to the floor, and breaks his arm. So all four characters get it in the end. This kind of sucks for the three men. The wife, though, seems to enjoy getting it in the end.

3. Nostril Rescue

One of my all-time favorite novels is *Don Quixote*. I could go on for hours about why it's so great, but whenever I do

that, people either fall asleep or find some mental escape where they no longer have to listen to me talking for hours about why *Don Quixote* is so great. So instead of talking about that, I'll talk about all the low humor in *Don Quixote*.

Parts of the novel read like a *Three Stooges* screenplay, with goofballs slapping each other around in ways that would be really harmful if we didn't know that it was all a joke. And in *Don Quixote*, there's no Moe to occasionally step into the middle of the madness and say, "Spread out!" Other parts of the book read like a Farrelly Brothers movie, with Don Quixote projectile vomiting into the face of his squire Sancho, and Sancho projectile vomiting right back on Don Quixote. And, sometimes, everyone in the scene is just trying to have sex with a hunchback dwarf. But my favorite scene comes when Don Quixote and Sancho encounter ominous sounds in the night. Don Quixote wants to confront whatever is making those sounds and fight him. Sancho neither wants to fight nor sit in the dark waiting for Don Quixote to fight. So Sancho hobbles Quixote's horse and hangs onto Quixote's leg until daybreak. The only problem is, in the middle of the night, Sancho has to take a crap. So he does the only reasonable thing. He drops trou, sticks his ass into the air, and craps.

Now, poop alone is funny enough for me, but what I really love about this scene is the way Quixote reacts. As the narrator tells us, "Since Sancho was clinging so very close to Quixote, it was inevitable that some of the fumes, rising in a straight line, would reach his nostrils, whereupon he went to their rescue by squeezing them between finger and thumb." I've read about some heroes in my day, but none can compare to Quixote's gallant rescue of his nostrils when doing battle with Sancho's smelly turd.

2. Shit-Eating Grins

Since I don't want you to think that only classic literature features great dick and poop moments, I'll talk about a contemporary author. Probably my favorite living author is Thomas Pynchon. I know his work is challenging. Sometimes it makes me think more than I want to think about things I don't particularly want to think about. But it's also insightful, clever, funny, and it creates



BRAD BESHAW

QUIXOTE'S GALLANT RESCUE OF HIS NOSTRILS

a perspective that is valuable to look through now and then. With that said, Pynchon likes his low humor as much as Cervantes did when writing *Don Quixote*. Sometimes, Pynchon's low humor is easy to catch on to, like when the hero of *Gravity's Rainbow* escapes occupied Germany in a hot-air balloon that

is smuggling custard pies, and the occupants of the hot-air balloon have to fight off Army special forces with those custard pies. Sometimes, Pynchon is more subtle.

In the book *Mason & Dixon*, Dixon gets himself into a bit of trouble, flees the scene, and meets back up with Mason.

The narrator describes Dixon as being "coprophagously a-grin." Now, I know from reading *Gravity's Rainbow* that coprophilia is the sexual attraction to feces. And because I read *Gravity's Rainbow* before the internet existed and before Designated Dale told me about his internet viewing habits, I was surprised that we actually have a word to describe the sexual attraction to feces. Nonetheless, the word coprophilia is in your standard dictionary, right next to coprophagy, which is the act of eating feces (a good word to know if you're watching *Pink Flamingos*). Thus, if you're coprophagous, you're feeding on feces, and if you're coprophagously a-grin, well...

1. A Shot in the Groin

One of the most difficult and rewarding novels I've read is an eighteenth-century British novel called *Tristram Shandy*. It's a bit of a parody of all those stuffy British novels that tell the life story of some fictional character and carry with it heavy-handed moral sermons. *Tristram Shandy*, on the other hand, never seems to make much progress in telling Tristram's story. The book ends after nine hundred or so pages, and Tristram is only three years old. We do get to start by learning about the night he was conceived. The second chapter follows his dad's sperm into the womb. The madness that ensues will teach you more eighteenth-century slang terms for penis than you could ever hope to learn. But best of all is Tristram's Uncle Toby.

Uncle Toby was shot in the "groin," which could literally mean the actual groin muscle or could be a polite way of saying that shrapnel tore through his dick and balls. As he recovers, everyone wants to know where, exactly, he was shot. So he gets a big map of the battlefield and shows them. But still, people want to know where, exactly, he was shot. In particular, the Widow Wadman would like to marry Uncle Toby, but before she does, she wants to know that his equipment is still functioning. Conventions of the time won't allow Widow Wadman to just ask Uncle Toby if it was his dick that got shot off or what, so she has to keep asking him where, exactly, he was shot. Uncle Toby goes so far as recreating a miniature of the battlefield in his backyard, walking Widow Wadman through all the events of his fateful day, standing behind one particular bulwark in one particular foxhole, and saying, "Right here. I was shot right here."

So there you have it, the answer to your burning question. And, if it's all too literary for you, I'll leave you with this:

My dad, who is not Shakespeare but is a Catholic, used to tell me that the only kind of meat a priest can eat on Friday is nun.

Ba-dump-bump.

—Sean Carswell



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

"Taco trucks are like the best punk rock bands: authentic, under the radar, fun while it lasts."

Adventures in the Underground Economy Part 1

The underground economy is the unregulated exchange of goods and/or services that is either illegal or untaxed. Examples include heroin, prostitution, video piracy, and undocumented leaf blowing. In some countries, shadow economies comprise more than half of the estimated market activity. Black markets are everywhere. All you have to do is look...

BLACK MARKET TACO

Put a man in a wheelchair and he becomes invisible. Well, not this man. This man is gonna holler. This man is gonna sing. He sits in the center of the open-air taco experience that is La Fachada and spits out a song. *Ooooooh, baby, baby, baby do you like it?*

The tiny little restaurant draped in sky-blue stucco the color of the Virgin Mary's robe is indistinguishable from dozens of establishments throughout Barrio Logan. It's the taco truck parked out front in the tiny lot that makes La Fachada special. But this truck won't come to you; you have to seek it out.

Make your way to Chicano Park, a nexus of grassy plots, handball courts, and vibrant murals that squat under the Coronado Bridge a mile south of downtown San Diego. Head east down Imperial until you see a billboard for an Indian casino. Follow the homeless man in the wheelchair. He knows.

The beauty of a taco truck that never actually goes anywhere is your customers always know where to find you. So do your enemies. The one-legged man in the government-issue wheelchair can relate.

There are many ways to make enemies in Barrio Logan. Arrange a handful of tables and chairs under a makeshift awning, plug a cash register into an extension cord, and get your Tia to make a shitload of tortillas. Open early and close late. Become popular with aficionados of after-hours entertainment. Make loads of cash.

La Fachada is one of San Diego's best taco trucks, so it was only a matter of time before the powers that be took note of the traffic, the noise, the money changing hands, the riff-raff that congregated in the parking lot directly across the street from the cop shop.

Taco trucks are like the best punk rock bands: authentic, under the radar, fun while it lasts.

Who are La Fachada's enemies, exactly?

The man in the wheelchair can tell you. Xenophobes. Racists. Proprietors of gastro trucks: high end caterers who view the taco trucks as competition.

La Fachada wasn't shut down exactly, but they were prohibited from selling tacos directly out of the truck. So they reconfigured their operation. Today, the taco truck sits empty, a gasoline-powered advertisement for happier days, like the man in the wheelchair, who seems pretty happy, or at least indifferent to his own suffering. He doesn't want your pity. He doesn't give a rat's ass about your spare change, but he can carry a tune and he expects to be compensated.

So where do the tacos come from? Hard to say. La Fachada means "the façade." The taco truck lives up to this name. Dark and empty, it serves as a three-ton menu board. The parking lot is a hive of activity. Aproned employees dart about. Cars pull in and out. The homeless man directs traffic from his filthy chair. His prosthetic limb dangles, in danger of falling off.

You order the lengua—tacos made from the tongue of a cow. The meat is steamed, not fried, and therefore healthier and more flavorful.

The cash register has been moved out from under the awning to tables set up in front of the restaurant. It's a picnic every day at La Fachada. The cashier, a young girl who wears a white baseball cap and a gold charm that reads *Virgen*, rings you up. Cash only. No sales tax. She speaks Spanish and English. She never smiles.

To her right sit huge vats of aqua fresca: plastic gourds bearing piña, jamaica, tamarind, and horchata. Just around the corner, men burn wood to make the charcoal. The taco truck serves as a shelter for the salsa bar. A free-standing grill sits at the edge of the awning bearing scorched jalapeños, mounds of grilled onions, a pot of beans. Serve yourself as much as you like.

Every few minutes cars arrive to navigate the throng of customers and aproned employees. In the center of the lot spins the man in the wheelchair. Sometimes he directs traffic, but mostly he sings. You eat your taco and watch the spectacle.

A man rolls up on his bicycle and leans his bike against a light pole. He is prison fit and slightly intoxicated. An ex-con. His bicycle slides down the pole like it is drunk, too. The drunk claps the homeless man in the wheelchair on the back. *I see you.*

The man in the wheelchair gets confused. Perhaps he prefers to be invisible. And it

finally happens: his prosthetic leg falls off. The drunk doesn't notice. You do not for a second consider returning the device to its not-so-right-minded owner. You leave it to a mustached man in an apron to pick up the prosthetic leg with a napkin. He holds it away from him like a chicken he pulled out of pot, like it might burn him if he gets too close to it.

The man in the wheelchair wants no part of it. *You keep it, amigo. Give me a taco and we'll call it a day.*

The ex-con on the bicycle, the amputee in the wheelchair, the virgin at the cash register, the cook who stopped to help a man who could not help himself, and in so doing quietly restored the façade.

Sampling San Diego's best black market taco is not without risks: the man who brings you your food may have been handling a homeless man's fake leg.

* * *

MEET THE ROWDIES

One of the myths of the black market is you have to seek it out. This isn't always true. Sometimes the shadow economy will come to you.

Open your doors and they'll flock to your home: undocumented nannies and au pairs, day laborers and gardeners, housekeepers and maids. Need your house painted? Your pipes plumbed? Your wires uncrossed? Black marketeers will fix you right up.

In fact, there are very few services that can't be provided in the comfort and privacy of your own home.

Like tattooing.

The Rowdies are a husband and wife team from San Antonio, Texas. Since 2008, they've been coming to San Diego no less than twice a year to practice their trade on a select group of clients. Back in San Antonio, the Rowdies work at, well, never mind where they work, but they both have jobs, pay taxes, vote, and give back to their community by volunteering at non-profit arts organizations that support under-funded neighborhoods like the ones they grew up in.

The Rowdies are the mellowest human beings you have ever met. Mellowness is a good quality for tattoo artists to possess because it's conducive to the kind of patient reflection tattooing demands. There's a reason why speed freaks and tweakers have terrible tattoos: speed freaks and tweakers



BILL PINKEL

Sampling San Diego's best black market taco is not without risks: the man who brings you your food may have been handling a homeless man's fake leg.

make terrible tattooists. You're only as good as the company you keep.

The absence of riff-raff, who tend to hang out at tattoo parlors because they keep the same hours as tattooists, is one of the many reasons why one might opt for in-home tattooing. A comfortable client is a happy client. It's all about controlling your environment. You can watch *I Love Lucy* re-runs, listen to whale songs, or even read a book. Whatever will ease the trauma you will spend hours willfully inflicting on your body.

Mrs. Rowdy, a fine tattooist in her own right, sets up Mr. Rowdy's gear. She preps the gun, lays out the needles, pours the ink into little tiny cups that are anchored to a piece of plastic with a thin film of petroleum jelly. They look like those watercolor kits sold in miniature ice cube trays, only smaller. While this goes on, Mr. Rowdy smokes a little pot. For medicinal purposes.

The Rowdies say "rowdy" the way you say, "cool" or "wow." It's an expression of incredulous affirmation. Apparently, it's a San Antonio thing.

The biggest benefit of in-home tattooing is the price break the customer

receives. In a tattoo parlor, a tattooist might charge anywhere upwards of one hundred dollars an hour, a significant portion of which goes to the owner of the tattoo shop. There is no overhead in the underground economy. The price can be negotiated on a number of factors: the time of the tattoo, the softness of the bed provided for the tattooist to sleep in, the quality of the weed you give him to smoke, whether or not your insistence on listening to whale songs drives him apeshit.

For the tattooist, in-home tattooing is a pain in the ass because he has to schlep all his gear around.

When the time comes, the tattooist draws the illustration, or at least the outline of it, and makes a stencil. After you approve the image's content, size, and placement, you lay down on a massage table. At the sound of the needle, your body prepares for pain, while the mind seeks distraction. And then it comes.

Gaah! you think, but don't say. Your hand flutters as if reaching for a knob that will allow you to turn down the pain.

You have read all kinds of books while

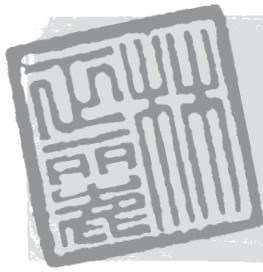
getting tattooed, including Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, which was a terrible, terrible idea, for reasons that ought to be obvious. Tonight, while Mr. Rowdy tattoos your upper chest, you opt for something a little less graphic: a monograph on Tom Waits's *Swordfishtrombones*.

The pain is spectacular. The pain is so bad you are convinced Mr. Rowdy is making it more painful *on purpose*. This is the hardest thing about self-directed pain: your body screams *Make it stop!* while your mind struggles to remain resolute in its decision to exchange money for needles zippering across your skin. Then the pain recedes and you ruminate on the comic genius/hot piece of ass that was Lucille Ball in her prime.

Four hours later, you look in the mirror. There is ink where there used to be skin. A lot of it.

You ask how much.
One hundred.
Rowdy.

—Jim Ruland



MONSTER OF FUN

AMY ADOYZIE

“Why are we taught to believe in things we can’t see?”

Existing Questions

Quite often, almost on a minute-by-minute-basis, I am reminded how little I understand the physical space and contemporary culture I live in. My small brain has trouble understanding abstract ideas, like the notion that everything we can see—and even things we cannot see like gas and odors—are made up of atoms. I have never seen an atom, except for science-book renderings that depicted them as miniscule glossy spheres. I’ve never been able to reconcile those tiny balls and how they form water, dirt, or fish sticks.

Apparently, lots of kids ask, ‘Why is the sky blue?’ though I don’t remember asking that myself. Some things just seemed obvious in their answer: the sky is blue because it’s the sky. What color would the sky be if it wasn’t blue?! I have seen a thick layer of clouds cover the sky so it was a muted grey stretching far beyond the horizon, and I have seen marbled swirls of fire orange and deep lavender glowing at sunset. I have seen night skies that looked like a mauve brown painted against black, a night sky resulting from clouds absorbing the lights of a city.

The first time I distinctly remember seeing a brown night sky was when I was in high school on the weekend of my grandmother’s funeral. As Buddhist ceremonies dictate, all of her kin were dressed in white robes and sat on straw mats for three days of prayer for her safe arrival into the underworld. On the second night, after a full day of mat-sitting, I looked into the sky and didn’t see the infinite expanse of space and stars. It was heavy and brown and felt like closed, thick curtains hung above us. By then I was too old to ask, ‘Why is the sky brown?’ though I don’t think anyone could have answered it for me.

What is brown? How do I know it’s not orange? Why is orange named after a fruit? Or is it the other way around? How come green is called green and not peas? Maybe folks who are color blind are the ones who are actually seeing colors as they are intended to be seen. Why are some eggs white and others are brown? Why do we eat eggs? Is it because eating the unfertilized unborn is so

delicious? What came first: the scramble or the omelet?

Why do high school students need to learn math beyond algebra and geometry? Is it really that practical to study calculus and trigonometry, especially in this economy when the vast number of university graduates can’t find work and end up shopping at the dollar store? Doesn’t it make more sense to teach them how to fill out food stamp applications without feeling shame?

How come “Communications” is still a valid field of study? It’s so vague and non-descript and it makes me feel as though universities are awarding degrees to students merely for showing up, paying tuition, and “communicating.” And what’s “Business Administration”? I know plenty of immigrants who are functionally illiterate in English and have been successful in owning small businesses without being tens of thousands of dollars in debt for a piece of paper. My mom is the general manager of two busy restaurants and she’s just learning how to send e-mails. And me? Well, with almost a decade worth of post-university experience, I’m still earning less than I did from my first big job after school.

Why do humans have memories and insight and inner monologues? How is it that these relatively small organs that sit inside our skulls can perform such complex tasks like recalling memories from decades past or being able to function on eighteen-hour workdays without my head rolling off my shoulders? But at the same time my brain isn’t able to parse away some space to remember the majority of my own birthday dinners or the name of my best friend from kindergarten who used to get into trouble with me for talking too much. I remember having mock elections in second grade and voting for George Bush (Sr.) over Michael Dukakis. I don’t remember why I chose him because my parents didn’t vote and didn’t discuss politics around the house. I remember voting for Nader in 2000 because I was emboldened by youth and naiveté and this foreign notion of *change*. I remember being seven-years-old and specifically

wanting to be the first Asian-American and woman president, but I can’t remember when that dream dissolved.

I remember loving the rain when it came occasionally during our southern California winters, and I remember my first day after I had moved to Portland, crying in frustration at the unrelenting downpour. I can remember details of all the places I’ve lived, like the Chinatown apartment with the broken tile in the kitchen that I used to pretend was the porthole into Adam West’s Batcave or the studio apartment I had in Van Nuys where I heard police helicopters buzz overhead everyday, but I cannot remember the specific addresses. I remember life before the internet and kinda feel bad for kids who will never know that. I can’t remember who I thought I’d be when I grew up—I’m not sure I have an idea now either.

Why do people have children, knowing full well the gamut of hurt and pain that can befall these small people? Why do I consider having my own children knowing the same thing? Is it narcissism or a biological drive? What does DNA look like? Am I really to believe that my blood stream is swimming with interwoven double helixes, floating about determining the color of my hair and the shape of my earlobes? Why are we taught to believe in things we can’t see? Why do I even care? Oh, wait, I care because when my dad blames me for being short because I didn’t sleep enough and insisted on staying up late during my adolescence, I don’t have to carry around the guilt of being a midget. I understand that I am short because he’s short too. Why didn’t I pay more attention in biology? Why aren’t I fascinated by quantum physics? Is it because I feel like the less I know, the better? Am I just trying to outrun the clock?

Why can’t we be more like all the other animals—naked, primal, and without desires beyond hunting, eating, and fucking? Why do I find myself yearning to be a dog? Sometimes I’ll look at my friends’ dogs and be envious of their lives, laying about and



STEVE LARDER

Isn't that why we spend more waking hours at our workplaces than we do at our homes, so that we have a soft spot to sleep in?

sleeping all day. They want nothing more than a w-a-l-k and perhaps a few crumbs from that sandwich you're eating. All they want is affection and to protect you and to snuggle up against your warmth on a cold night. I mean, really, that's all I want too. We want comfort and isn't that why we work so hard? Isn't that why we spend more waking hours at our workplaces than we do at our homes, so that we have a soft spot to sleep in?

I remember being a kid and looking at the clouds in the sky and daydreaming about living on them like the Care Bears did. I remember being on my first plane ride when I was eighteen years old and thinking how amazing it was going to be above the clouds. A couple years ago, I hiked through Nepal and literally walked above a cloud. It was anticlimactic and satisfying at the same time. Why am I so obsessed with the sky and whatever it is

that inhabits it? Why do I want to be up there when it's blue or grey or brown? Even though birds get to soar high, do they even enjoy it? Is it better to not know than it is to wonder endlessly?

—Amy Adoyzie
amyadoyzie.com

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BASICALLY, I AM SOCIALLY RETARDED.

MY STUPID LIFE
BY MITCH CLEM
WATERCOLORS BY NATION OF AMANDA

(EXCUSE ME, "DIFFERENTLY TARDER")

IT HAPPENS WHENEVER I MEET SOMEONE NEW, OR ENTER A SOCIAL SITUATION OUTSIDE MY NORMAL COMFORT ZONE (THE WORST FOR ME ARE PARTIES, HOUSE SHOWS, AND THE ENTIRE CITY OF AUSTIN), I'M SO UP IN MY OWN HEAD WITH SELF-LOATHING AND ANXIETY THAT I ASSUME WHOEVER I'M TALKING TO HATES ME AS MUCH AS I DO.

I CAN'T CONCENTRATE ON HAVING FUN BECAUSE I'M TOO BUSY CRITIQUING MYSELF FOR EVERY DUMB THING I SAY, AND EVENTUALLY I GET SO STRESSED OUT I BAIL EARLY, AND THEN SPEND THE REST OF THE NIGHT DEPRESSED OVER HOW STUPID I'M BEING AND HOW I'M ALMOST THIRTY NOW AND THIS SHIT STILL HAPPENS AND BLEEARGG...

UGH

I AM A HAUNTED HOUSE.

BUT THEN I'LL MEET SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LIKE ME, SOMEONE WHO IS STRAIGHT-UP HOSTILE TOWARDS ME, AND I CAN'T TELL.

TAKE, FOR INSTANCE, THE ANONYMOUS CRUSTY KID WHO APPROACHED ME OUTSIDE A TOYS THAT KILL/ARRIVALS SHOW IN SAN ANTONIO LAST NOVEMBER:

HEY MAN, YOU MIND IF I NAB A SWIG OFF YOUR BEER?

OH WOW.

UH...

YEAH DUDE, I DON'T KNOW, THAT'S KINDA WEIRD. PLUS I CAN BARELY AFFORD MY OWN BEER TONIGHT...

HEH.

YEAH, YOU ACTUALLY MIGHT HAVE PROPOSITIONED THE POOREST PEOPLE HERE.

OH REALLY? "THE POOREST"? DO YOU TWO LIVE ON THE STREET?!

BWAHAHAHA!!!

YEAH MAN, I ACTUALLY BUILT A BED FRAME OUT OF STREETS CDS! YOU KNOW, THE ENGLISH RAPPER?

THE HEADBOARD IS MADE FROM STREET DOGS LP JACKETS.

HA HA HA!

I SLEEP ON IT EVERY NIGHT!

HEH HEH...

WAIT...

ARE YOU BEING A DICK?



“I think there’s about four or five hundred bras in this trunk.”

Nardwuar The Human Serviette vs. Drake!

Nardwuar: Who are you?

Drake: My name is Aubrey Drake Graham and I am a rapper, musician, entertainer.

Nardwuar: And, Drake, who do you have beside you?

Drake: One of my best friends in the world—and the other half of me as far as music goes—and he can introduce himself.

40: 40.

Nardwuar: Hello 40!

40: What’s poppin’? [laughs]

Nardwuar: Welcome to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, Drake and 40.

Drake: Thank you. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Right off the bat, I’d like to give you guys some gifts to welcome you to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. And I think they play some significance in your lives. What can you tell the people about Little Brother and Big L? [Nardwuar pulls out some vinyl]

Drake: [laughs] Oh man, this is amazing!

40: I can tell you that I think I have this record.

Drake: You definitely have that record, by the way, and I can tell you that I definitely have this song, for sure...

Nardwuar: But do you have the instrumental versions?

Drake: I don’t, and...

Nardwuar: On vinyl?

Drake: No.

Nardwuar: So the gift is not backfiring right now?

Drake: It’s not, it’s incredible. [laughs]

Nardwuar: What can you tell the people, first off, about Little Brother? We’re in a studio here in Vancouver. Now, Little Brother might be getting in the studio with you. What can you tell the people about Little Brother?

Drake: I can tell the people that to say I am a Little Brother fan would be an understatement. To say I am a 9th Wonder fan would be an extreme understatement. And to say that Phonte is a good rapper would be offensive to me because he’s probably one of the best rappers of all time, in my opinion. Um, and, what else can I tell you? I can tell you that I’ve done a song with these guys and they’re phenomenal. I can tell you that I would love for Phonte to be on my new album. That would pretty much... that would sum up my Little Brother summary.

Nardwuar: I wanna say, Drake, the ladies love you and you love the ladies, don’t you?

Drake: Very much so.

Nardwuar: What exactly happened in Cleveland? I saw a bra stand? What is a bra stand?

Drake: I actually, well, I put my favorite... I put, like, the biggest-breasted bras on my mic stand. I try and showcase the fact that, you know, women with a full chest, it’s nothing to be ashamed of. You shouldn’t go get them reduced, they’re beautiful. You know, breasts are a beautiful thing, and I actually have an entire trunk. I think there’s about four or five hundred bras in this trunk. It’s a black trunk and I carry it with me on the road, so it’s pretty much every bra I’ve ever received.

Nardwuar: This is a lady that you love, isn’t it, right here? [Nardwuar pulls out the *Coffy* soundtrack]

Drake: [laughs] I love this woman more than anything. Is this autographed?

Nardwuar: It is.

Drake: Is this for me?

Nardwuar: Actually, I think it says “To Nardwuar,” doesn’t it?

Drake: It does. I dunno, I just thought that... Wow, this is amazing.

Nardwuar: Who is this, right here?

Drake: This is Pam Grier.

Nardwuar: This is Pam Grier, *Coffy*.

Drake: This is *Coffy* and this right here, this woman, oh man, this is gonna sound so weird, but when I first discovered what masturbation was, I used to jerk off to, umm, to Pam Grier.

Nardwuar: And now we have Cherokee (a Native American pornographic actress).

Drake: [laughs] I dunno. I don’t necessarily. [laughs] That’s who the internet has, yeah. [laughs] That’s amazing that you said that. [laughs] Well, yeah, this is the first, like, I think Pam Grier is really responsible for shaping my taste in women, if you really look at her. I mean, she was always holding a gun, which is pretty attractive to me, and she was just built the way I like women. You just basically reminded me of why my life is the way it is, but this is amazing.

Nardwuar: Here we have an Al Green record, Drake. [Nardwuar pulls out an Al Green LP]

Drake: Yes.

Nardwuar: Now, if we turn this record over, we can investigate more into Drake’s history. It’s kind of confusing. What do we have there? Uncle Willie. Can you please tell us about this?

Drake: My Uncle Willie Mitchell, he would be the producer with Al Green. He’s the remix engineer, so he’s 40. Not project remix, by the way, just the remix engineer. Ummm, and where else is his name?

Nardwuar: Well, over here we have some more interesting people. [Nardwuar points to more credits on the LP] We have Teenie Hodges, Charles Hodges, and Leroy Hodges. How many of those are you related to?

Drake: Well, I believe that Teenie Hodges is my relation. Mabon Teenie Hodges is his full name, a very close uncle. You have to go to his house. If you can ever... I’m “Pharrell” this situation (Pharrell Williams helped Nardwuar get a Jay-Z interview), I’m gonna set up an interview with Teenie Hodges so you can go and see all the great things inside his house, because his house is amazing. He has legendary artifacts that I think he would probably be willing to part with if he ever met you, because you’re such a great person.

Nardwuar: Thank you. I would love that. That would be incredible.

Drake: Yeah, if you’re ever willing to go to Memphis, I’ll make it happen.

Nardwuar: It doesn’t just end there, does it Drake? No, you go down more and more and we have the... [Nardwuar pulls out another LP]

Drake: [laughs] Oh my goodness, this is amazing.

Nardwuar: Who is this? What record is this?

Drake: This is my uncle. This is Larry Graham, and Graham Central Station. Wow, this is uh...

Nardwuar: I love that album cover, too.

Drake: Amazing. [laughs]

40: Nardwuar, you’re doing some serious work here.

Drake: This is the best interview I’ve ever done, by the way, in my entire life. This album cover’s incredible, and I want to look at the songs that are on here. Wow, this is amazing. Produced by Larry Graham.

Drake: Is this
for me?

Nardwuar:
Actually,
I think it says
"To
Nardwuar,"
doesn't it?

Drake:
It does.



DANNY MARTIN

Nardwuar: So growing up with Larry Graham, Uncle Willie, and Teenie Hodges; this is amazing!

Drake: It is. And Pastor Al, too.

Nardwuar: They all have neat record collections and stuff. They kept everything.

Drake: Yeah, they do. I mean, it's been a while. Actually, you know, I can say that I have yet to make that trip to Memphis, where I come back and say, "Okay, now I'm immersed in music, and I wanna see everything," you know. But now, this has prompted me to take 40 and we're gonna go to Memphis, Tennessee, and I'm gonna come to you with a case of things that are gonna blow your mind.

Nardwuar: I really appreciate that Drake because there's so much stuff. Like for instance, Larry Graham, he was the guy in Sly, right?

Drake: Yes.

Nardwuar: He was playing bass in Sly And The...

Drake: Yeah, Family Stone.

Nardwuar: Family Stone. But he also put out lots of solo records. Check out this solo record of his. [Nardwuar pulls out another Larry Graham LP]

Drake: [laughs] My goodness.

Nardwuar: Larry Graham's *Star Walk*. I love this cover. You've gotta do this.

Drake: I have to re-enact this cover at some point. Wow, this is amazing, too. This is crazy, I've never... no one's ever done this before.

Nardwuar: I thought all this stuff was at your house.

Drake: It's not. [laughs] Where can I—where did you find this? Did you find this in Vancouver?

Nardwuar: Yes, it's all from a record store in Vancouver, Beat Street.

Drake: Beat Street? Well, shout out to Beat Street, man. This is cra-zy. This is crazy [laughs].

Nardwuar: We can try and hook you up with some of those, if you'd like.

Drake: Please! Yes, I really want... I need this. This one, and this one, obviously, (*Coffy Soundtrack*), but I don't want it to say "love Nardwuar," 'cause I wouldn't wanna take that from you, that's... if I had this, this would probably be in my top three possessions, next to uhhh, my I don't know, I have a *Degrassi* DVD autographed by the entire cast, that's probably up there, and uh...

Nardwuar: That is pretty good.

Drake: Yeah, and I still have that microphone that Pusha T autographed, so... This would probably be up there in those top three.

Nardwuar: And I'd like to end here with a little quote: "All I need's a fucking red jack..."

Drake: Oh, "All I need is the fucking red jacket with some zippers."

Nardwuar: That's what I was thinking about. And I could help you out on that, Drake.

Drake: Really? [laughs]

Nardwuar: Yes, I have a jacket for you, right here. [Nardwuar pulls out two Michael Jackson-like red zippered jackets] In fact, I have two jackets right here. One for me and one for you. So I thought we could end the interview right here, if you could just hold the

mic, right there 40, we can end the interview together wearing the jackets.

Drake: Yes, [laughs] this is the greatest interview of all time.

[Drake and Nardwuar put on the red jackets]

Nardwuar: You've never come across any of these jackets? Nobody's thrown these on stage?

Drake: No. Never. [laughs] I don't even know where I'd find something like this. I think I wore one of these on Degrassi one time, but it was full sleeved. But this is the vest, so this is way better. Yeah, this is my first time ever wearing an actual red jacket with the zippers, a fucking red jacket with the zippers.

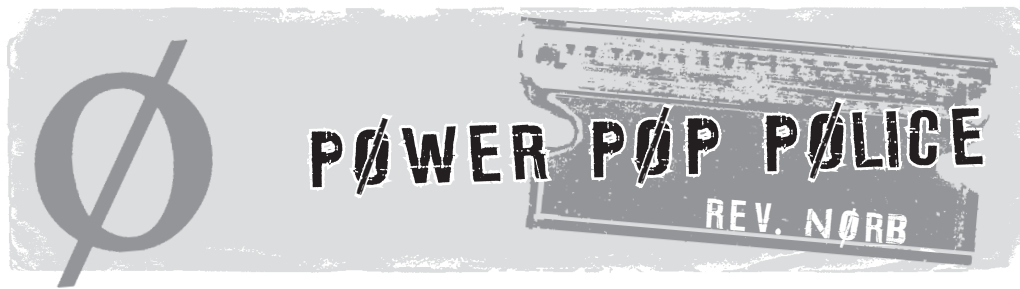
Nardwuar: Thanks so much Drake. Anything else you want to add to the people out there, at all?

Drake: I would just like to say that it's been a legendary experience doing this with 40. We both grew up watching you, so man, it's great. And to the city of Vancouver, what a beautiful place, thank you for hosting us. And that's it.

Nardwuar: Well, thanks so much for the kind words 40 and Drake. Keep on rockin' in the free world and doot doola doot doo...

D and 40: Doot doo! [laughter]

To hear and watch this interview check out <http://www.nardwuar.com>



“People who live in metal houses get magnetic poetry more or less thrown at them.”

FAILURE TO REMAIN PUNK: THE CASE FOR AND AGAINST MAGNETS

So i'm trying to vacuum my goddamn living room floor the other night. I wasn't real big on cleaning the house in the 2000s. I estimate it will take me seven lifetimes to bring my metal abode back to the state of vague cleanliness and order it had in the '90s, unless the Republicans and/or Pharaohs bring back slavery, in which case it can probably be tidied up in six. In any event, my throes of vacuuming ecstasy keep getting rudely interrupted by these wayward bits of magnetic poetry—you know, the dippy little word magnets on your refrigerator with which your drunken friends can amuse themselves at parties, rearranging the words into phrases they imagine to be clever and novel and risqué, even though every magnetic poetry phrase ever assembled by anyone, anywhere, invariably sounds like it was concocted by the same sexually frustrated library science student—which make aggravating clicking sounds as i suck them up. In most of Planet Earth's many dwellings, magnetic poetry is a novel enough Hoovering hazard that most folks have not bothered to form much of an opinion on it, for good or ill. My debris-strewn abode, however—being as how it's, oh, i don't know, say, **CONSTRUCTED COMPLETELY OF METAL**—walls, ceilings, and doors—ups the ante on the rather dodgy problem of magnetic poetry, to the point where, at my place, AWOL bits of magnetic shite are on the same painfully ubiquitous level as, say, a home infestation of box elder bugs or something ((which i also have, in case you're interested)). It's a matter of public opinion that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, but it's a matter of empirical fact that people who live in metal houses get magnetic poetry more or less thrown at them ((then we turn around and go throw it back at the people who live in the glass houses. It generally has no effect, unless we wrap the magnetic poetry around a brick beforehand, in which case the results are suitably enriching)) thus I HAVE FUCKING MAGNETIC POETRY EVERYWHERE ((and not in an “interesting” kinda “everywhere,” like *Guinness Book Of World Records* “everywhere,” either. Just... everywhere)). I have *drive* and *is* and *see but white* and *worship our every sweet* on the back of my front door. I have *no monument metal cigarette there and always above sculpture silhouette* on the wall next to it, and

then around the corner from that i have some goddamn thing that reads *to compose mad black passion is never balance & harmony welding sex* which is in very close proximity to the phrase *waste beer*—and if the beer in question did, in fact, prompt the poetry in question, that's probably a fairly apt description of the beer's fate. And *these*, i hasten to add, are on the walls that are *relatively devoid of the magnetic poetry virus*. I still have the lengthy DIY magnetic poems i created using the words from the song titles off of twenty punk albums on one wall, and the exterior of my home definitely gives the impression that God or Atlas or someone ((possibly the Allosaurus from *Land of the Lost*)), on the tail end of a surely epic magnet-eating and Vermox®-drinking jag, vomited a titanic gutload of magnetic poetry all over my porch. The shit is inside, it's outside, it's in my bathroom, it's in my kitchen, *it's fucking everywhere*. And, of course, magnetic poetry is just the tip of the iceberg: I also have those magnetically-backed plastic letters and numbers that kids learn to spell with stuck all over the place, spelling out some kinda bullshit equation on the bathroom wall over the toilet, and “NORB HAUS” under my porch light ((although i found out that the letters didn't really glow in the dark, as advertised, so they just wound up getting caked over with cobwebs and bits of dead moths, which was not exactly the effect for which i was going)). I tried aping the look of Nick Lowe's *Pure Pop for Now People* album by arranging random letters neatly in the corners of the three-foot squares made by my metal wall tiles, but then some douche moved my neatly arranged letters in order to spell out “KIP.” Thanks, KIP, you fucking DICK. But, of course, that's nowhere near all the magnetically-induced hoo-hah with which i contend on a daily basis: I have bottle openers stuck to my walls in the shape of Pilsner glasses and guitars and basketballs; Wacky Packages™ and 2009 calendars from my plumber; directions to the Motor City Comic Con and koi fish and random translucent plastic globes. I have miniature candy bars, souvenirs from amusement parks i've never been near, topless women and the Marx Brothers and Dirt Bike Annie and Catwoman and the Venus de Milo wearing a leather jacket and Delaware and Green Bay Packers schedules dating back to 1995. I

have Max from *Where The Wild Things Are* helping keep a Japanese Cheap Trick picture sleeve 45 from falling off the wall, and at least four different interpretations of Mojo Jojo. I have decided that *it all fucking sucks*. I'M SICK OF FUCKING MAGNETS!!! THEY LOOK FUCKING STUPID!!! ((except, of course, for the BORIS PUSSY MAGNET®)). *Yes, i live in a metal house! Yes, that means you want to give me magnets! I get it!* If i was short, you would probably continuously shove my house full of shrimp memorabilia! I DON'T WANT ANY MORE GOD DAMN MAGNETS!!! I DON'T EVEN WANT THE ONES I HAVE NOW!!! ((except, of course, for the BORIS PUSSY MAGNET®, which is the punkest and most vaginal magnet ever)). I have finally seen the light: Magnets are just a bunch of un-hip visual clutter. And, i daresay, I THINK THEY MIGHT NOT BE PUNK ((Except, of course, for the BORIS PUSSY MAGNET®, the last surviving bit of van debris from the Boris The Sprinkler tour van of the '90s)) This is a bit of revelation for me: Like most of us, i had always sort of assumed magnets, and magnetism, were punk ((or, at bare minimum, mod)). Magnetism always seemed vaguely charged by a certain *Shock Of The New*-styled freakiness—it obviously wasn't a warm hippie thing, like solar energy, or all hairy and working class, like friction—nor was it all ponderous and heavy metal like gravity. Magnetism was usually some kind of stolen kick that occurred between two small little everyday objects that somehow did this totally crazy and intense parlor trick when you brought them together; if magnetism were made flesh, one assumes it would don a skinny tie as it walked, Misfits-like, among us. Further, i feel fairly confident in saying that if magnetism ruled, Zodiac-like, over a particular body part, i think we could all agree that magnetism's province would be the testicles ((a very useful body part for creating punk rock and power pop [[in point of fact, i could see great benefit in inventing a 21st century masturbation device involving a pair of big hand-held magnets, the size of flat irons, which induced orgasm via pleasurable magnetic field fluctuations. Of course, holding a pair of huge magnets a few inches from one's privates is a hell of a time to find out that testicles could be LITERALLY magnetic, especially if each one swings out



RYAN GELATIN

and sharply snaps to magnetic adhesion, with an audible and incredibly painful CLANG, against one of the magnets, causing the magnet holder {{and testicle owner}} to inadvertently invert the position of one of the magnets, causing them to swiftly and violently slam together, wayward junk trapped in the middle, in an unstoppable vortex of polar attraction, leading me to believe that this is a vision best left to the realm of the theoretical]])). But, in the cold, hard light of factual analysis, apart from the Boris Pussy Magnet®, what have magnets really ever done for punk rock? I mean, Television had that song called “Friction,” which was pretty good, and the Jim Carroll Band had that song called “Gravity,” which was also pretty good, but magnets just had that second Vapors album, which was kinda...i dunno...weird. “Magnets” is nowhere near as good a song as “Gravity” nor “Friction”; what the hell, have we backed the third dog in a three-dog race? I mean, the Parasites used to buy one state-shaped magnet in every state they passed thru on tour, attempting to assemble an entire map of the U.S. on the ceiling of their van, but the

states were never in scale with each other so the West Coast looked normal but by the time you got to New England, it just looked like a bunch of broken graham cracker pieces. And, sure, there was the AM radio hit “Magnet & Steel” by Walter Egan in 1978, but even though Matthew of the Candy Snatchers ((God rest his magnetic soul)), a fellow whose punkness cannot be legitimately called into question, loved that song, it’s still about as far from anything remotely “punk” as one can get without using a piccolo ((non-sexually)). There is a line in my favorite Greg Kihn song ((YES, I HAVE A FAVORITE GREG KIHN SONG, FUCK OFF)), “Museum,” that goes “*I was a helpless victim of your magnetism/I love you from the bottom of my organism,*” but Walter Egan, Greg Kihn, the Parasites’ van and the second Vapors album hardly add up to a convincing argument for magnetism’s punkness, by *any* lunatic’s yardstick. The ONLY really punk manifestation of applied magnetics was that goddamn Boris Pussy Magnet®, which sat on our dashboard just in front of my driver’s seat for a decade, acting as the metaphorical carrot to my not-entirely-metaphorical stick

i had always sort of assumed magnets, and magnetism, were punk

it obviously wasn’t a warm hippie thing, like solar energy, or all hairy and working class, like friction—nor was it all ponderous and heavy metal like gravity.

((Tired? Rainy? Gettin’ late? Just *DRIVE TOWARDS THE PUSSY, pardner!*)). The BPM® is the only magnet i own that is worth a pinch of magnetic birdshit, punkness-wise, and, as i speak, i am preparing to REMOVE said magnet from its position of exaltation over my ((non-functional)) bathroom door, and surrender it to our drummer, who requested, cons ago, that, in any final clearance of remaindered Boris debris, the Boris Pussy Magnet®—yellowed and funky ((and, now that i look at it, frickin’ hairy! I forgot that they still had pubic hair in the ‘90s)) as it may be—must go to him.

((pause for solemn reflection))

It is done. The Boris Pussy Magnet® has been removed and earmarked for surrender. With this crown jewel of my rampant magnet horde gone, all other such magnetic gizmos appear second-rate and insipid, and the public is invited to cart them away, free of charge. The only catch is that they are now adhered, en masse, to my testicles.

Love,
—Nørb

CHICO SIMIO

NO. 24

"DANGEROUS
QUESTION"

• ART •

SO, MR. SIMIO, WHAT KIND OF
MUSICOR MUSICAL GROUPS
DO YOU LIKE?

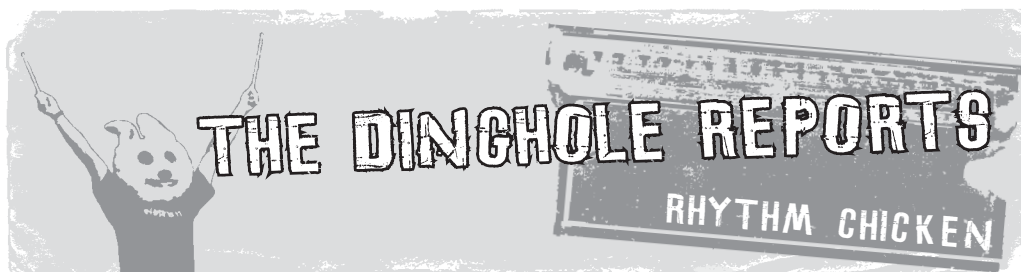
BRREEEAAATHHE...



MEL TORME (FUCK FRANK SINATRA), THE RAMONES, THE MUMMIES, THE CLASH, THE WOGGLES, MOTORHEAD, HENRY FIAT'S OPEN SORE, IGGY POP, DAVID BOWIE, THE BEATLES, THE ROLLING STONES, THEE HEADCOATS, THE HUMBERS, B.B. KING, HOWLING WOLF, LEADBELLY, BDP, PUBLIC ENEMY, THE BRIEFS, THE CRAMPS, DMC, DEVO, THE CHIPMUNKS, THE SUPREMES, THE DOORS, THE GORIES, GUITAR WOLF, TEENGENERATE, THE KINKS, THE WHO, MARY WELLS, THE MISFITS, THE NEW YORK DOLLS, JOHNNY THUNDERS, JOHNNY CASH, DEAD BOYS, THE DRIFTERS, THE HIVES, IRON MAIDEN, BLACK SABBATH, JETHRO TULL (YES, I SAID JETHRO TULL), LOUIS PRIMA & KEELY SMITH, THE OBLIVIANS, THE PAGANS, THE SAINTS, THE CANDY SNATCHERS, RAY CHARLES, SAM COOKE, THE SONICS, SLAYER, THE MORLOCS, DIRTY LOVERS, THE MAKERS, SUPERCHARGER, JOY DIVISION, ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT, THE GERMS, THE ZEROS, FEAR, THE REZILLOS, BLACK FLAG, SEX PISTOLS, THE KINGSMEN, THE MONKS, SLICK RICK, DANA DANE, N.W.A., ICE T, THE SOVIETTES, BRATMOBILE, THE CRUMBS, THE THUMBS, TOYS THAT KILL, THE DWARVES, THE EPOXIES, BOB WILLS & HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS, BILLY JACK WILLS, SPADE COOLEY, RED INGLE, TENNESSEE ERNIE FORD, TINY TIM, THE WHITE STRIPES, SLIM GAILLARD, NICK CAVE, THE DICKIES, LOU REED, VELVET UNDERGROUND, DIGITAL UNDERGROUND, BOW WOW WOW, THE SKATALITES, NOT THE BEACH BOYS, THE RONETTES, JOAN ELLA FITZGERALD, DUKE ELLINGTON, CREAM,

OKAY! OKAY! WE HAVE
ENOUGH NOW! YOU CAN
STOP!





"I like to think that your inner punkness grows stronger when it has to struggle to survive."

Pre-Parade Puke Ruckus

The Dinghole Reports
By The Rhythm Chicken
(Commentary by Francis Funyuns)
[Edited by Dr. Sicnarf]

It's November now and there are daily snow flurries here on this skinny peninsula out in northern Lake Michigan. I look into my backyard and see nature at its finest, a thickly wooded lot overflowing with cute critters and old world tranquility. The fluffy snowflakes gently land on the back deck. My quiet town by summer standards is now a ghost town and cars rarely pass by on the *highway* out front. I relax at my backyard window with a steaming cup of hot cocoa and bask in the deafening peacefulness. I reach over to my turntable and put the needle to wax. The speakers shatter the silence while M.I.A.'s *Murder in a Foreign Place* screams about my home.

I live up near the tip of this peninsula, a very strange land formation which only allows me one path back to civilization. I must pass through all of the other quaint little harbor towns until I get to Sturgeon Bay, the county's only city. Sturgeon Bay has shipyards and a Wal-Mart, but one must travel further south another forty miles to Green Bay to see anything resembling a punk rock scene. If I want to see live punk rock or flip through the vinyl at a record store, I have to drive two hours south from my home. I have to pass through God's country to get to the gutter. With M.I.A. still blaring in the background, I ask myself, "What really is punk rock about Door County, Wisconsin?"

Well, from a historical standpoint, there has been a substantial score of punk bands from the Sturgeon Bay area: the Noise Mechanics, Life, Garage Sale, Malignance, and even Screeching Weasel's first drummer, Steve Cheese, was from Sturgeon Bay. Then there was the one punk band that I know of from my own northwoods location, Ballistic Biscuit. But over the last twelve years, Door County has been a veritable dead spot in the punk rock world. Why would a self-proclaimed modern day punk rocker choose to live in such a *punkless* climate?

(Seriously, Chicken. Why don't you move back to Milwaukee, or Poland, or something? – F.F.)

Well, I wouldn't necessarily say that Door County is completely *punkless*. There are a few indoor skate ramps where my friends and I can be found skating various transitions to the sounds of Black Flag and cans of Hamm's

opening. The café I work at has a great iPod selection of variously appropriate and inappropriate tunes. My boss/friend Ryan gets a wry smirk serving fancy espresso drinks to rich Chicago tourists when the Minutemen's *This Aint No Picnic* fills the café. My doctor/friend, Dr. Phil, will blare the Humpers at his backyard bonfires on top of playing Jesus Lizard videos in his office when I'm there. Then there's all the punk rock which blasts from my living room stereo. I'm guessing most of you punker cretins out there also spend most of your punk time with your butts planted in your living rooms as well, even though all those great clubs and record stores are right outside your door.

[You got a point there, Mr. Chicken. I live in Milwaukee and the most punk rock I hear is when I visit you UP HERE! – Dr. S.]

In all fairness, I know there's a great live scene out there with great bands playing amazingly fun shows and all that, but when you live there and it's always there, the punk tends to get a little, dare I say, bland. If I limit my visits to civilization to once every month or so, then the punk rock becomes a real treat! December I'll go to Chicago. January to Milwaukee. February to Green Bay. March to Minneapolis... er, if the D4 guys don't ban me from their fine city. I like to think that your *inner punkness* grows stronger when it has to struggle to survive. When you're stuck in a certain city where a certain kind of punk is popular, you might find your creativity subconsciously compromised. Whether your punk is in the form of a band, a zine, visual arts, or words on a page, I like to think that being stranded out in Fucksville works to your advantage.

(Wait, wait... so you mean to tell me that hoity-toity, pretty little touristy Door County is more punk rock than Milwaukee or Green Bay? – F.F.)

Not at all. In fact, I revel in the fact that my home is much less punk rock than such cities. Now when I make punk rock visits to Chicago, Baltimore, L.A., San Diego, Minneapolis, Kansas City, or Green Bay, I have a frickin' blast! Absence makes the punk rock heart grow fonder? Maybe. Anyway, that's how it works for me. Besides, whenever I live in these cities I usually spend *waaaaaay* too much time sitting in various punk rock clubs drinking *waaaaaay* too much beer, so maybe limiting my exposure to the punk rock (or the punk rock's exposure

to me?) is best for all parties involved? Maybe. Anyway, like I said, living here works for me, so get offa my back, Francis!

(Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you live on a punkless peninsula out in Lake Michigan. What does this have to do with the *ruckus*? – F.F.)

[Wait a second. Isn't truckus inherently punk rock, or is it vice versa? Which anti-establishment ideology envelopes the other? – Dr. S.]

Thank you, Sicnarf. That brings up an important question: "What is punk rock?" I'm not even going to attempt a definition of that one. All I'm going to say is that when you actually see punk rock, you know it. You point your finger and say "Now *that's* punk rock!" As for the not so important question, "What is ruckus?" well, that's an easy one. Ruckus is when a washed-up, old punk rock drummer puts on a stinky chicken head and plays his piece of shit drumset in strange public places in a feeble attempt to offend people and basically entertain himself. That being said, let's get to the ruckus.

Dinghole Report #117: Parade Puke Is Punk Rock! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #473)

So another autumn brings with it another Fall Fest here in northern Door County. As I've mentioned in years past, Fall Fest is also known to the locals as "Fall-Down Fest" for we are prone to celebrate the end of another grueling tourist season with a libation or two... or more than two. On the Friday night of Fall Fest weekend, my trusted comrade, Mr. Ruckus O'Reilly, drove up from Green Bay to partake in the falling down. That night I had a wrestling match with quite a few different boozes. Let's just say the Jameson won (again). On the trip home, Ruckus had to pull over so I could fall out of his vehicle into the ditch to, er, *eject* the excess whiskey my system would not accept anymore. I was in stellar shape.

A few hours later, I woke up to my alarm reminding me that I had a morning parade to attack. Feeling quite under the weather, I hauled my chickenkit from the basement out to the car. I shook Ruckus awake and quickly trucked the both of us down to the town coffee shop. He got a coffee. I got a water, which was all my dainty tummy could handle at that point. We headed off to the parade's setup and starting line-up area. Once there, we found my friend Dave's jeep and trailer he was providing for the Chicken. This year, my float was being



DAN THE EGGMAN EGGERT

**Ruckus is...
when a washed-up, old punk rock drummer
puts on a stinky chicken head and plays his
piece of shit drumset in strange public places
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basically entertain himself.**

sponsored by the Door County Half Marathon and *Door County Living* magazine, both of which are under Dave's influence. Dave likes the Replacements and is a good chap.

Once the drums were set up and the flags and banners were affixed to the float we sat and waited for the parade to start. While chatting with Dave and his girlfriend, I started to gag and vomit up my water. My body was not happy. A few minutes later, in mid-sentence, I stepped aside again to vomit up a syrupy green substance. Dave comments, "That's bile, Chicken." Thank you, Dave. Thank you very much. For the next fifteen minutes I kept gagging and dry heaving. My body was pushed to the limit. What's the best course of action in a situation like this?

(RUCKUS!!!!!! – F.F.)

Like a real pro, I crawled up onto the float and began drumming. Over the years, I've noticed that constant drumming holds back vomit! So, feeling like a million bucks, I proceeded to drum and drum and drum, rocking out my usual parade ruckus through the entire parade! The weather was superb that autumn morning and the parade crowd was bigger than ever. Children, parents, locals, tourists, guys, girls, and dogs all cheered the Chicken on through the entire parade, quite oblivious to the fact that I was puking my guts out all morning.

[You really do lead a glamorous life there, Chicken. – Dr. S.]

We reached the end of the parade route, after a good twenty minutes of hardcore ruckus rocking, and my inclination to vomit had

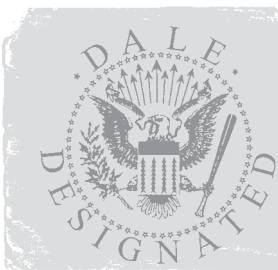
subsided. It was time for me to zoom down to Ephraim to go to work. Yes, work. I was a little less than excited to go to work. My body really hated me at this point. A few days later, I ran into my friend Adam who mentioned to me, "I saw you in the parade Saturday. All I could think of was how hung over you must've been and how horrible it must feel to have to be a Rhythm Chicken in the parade through all that." Then he pointed to me and stated, "That was punk rock!"

So there you have it. This issue's definition of punk rock is puking your guts out until you jump into a parade to pound your drums in a chicken head. This instance aside, I tell you there ain't much punk about Door County, Wisconsin.

–Rhythm Chicken
rhythmchicken@hotmail.com



HAZORCAKE 21



I'M AGAINST IT

DESIGNATED DALE

"Music is definitely some of the best therapy one can self-medicate with, both listening to and actually playing it."

Shut Up and Play!

Since this past summer, I've started up a new band with some very good friends (and fellow Razorcakers) Art Fuentes and Jeff Fox called Charm Machine. It kick-started an ongoing love affair with an old flame of mine: drum-wailing. It's been a couple of years since I've played in an original band. I forgot just how completely fucking rad a feeling it is to rip it out live with a gang of my holmeses who also get off on bringing the rock.

I've been monkeying around on the skins since I was a heathen child in the sixth grade (I'm forty-one now), getting my feet wet by bashing along to KISS records and playing in the elementary school band. Funny thing is, even as a kid, I remember vividly pulling up the stylus on the turntable repeatedly, going back to re-listen again and again to multiple beats, as well as hundreds of drum-fill jibs in those songs I was trying to play along to. I caught on pretty quickly for a kid who taught himself how to play by listening.

As I reached my early teens, I got really heavy into bands like Led Zeppelin (Fuck you, Dale -Todd), Black Sabbath, and Iron Maiden. Trying to unlock the drum patterns to their songs was like a chimp trying to solve a Rubik's Cube, but this here chimp was no chump. I persisted on feeling pretty damn happy with the results that were soon gained. I quickly became a very big fan of John Bonham, the drummer for Led Zeppelin. He's still my favorite rock drummer to this day, actually. Love or hate Zeppelin, you can't deny his raw-as-fuck punk attitude that radiates through his playing. You just can't.

It was at this time I got my first kit: a five-piece silver cream Maxwin set-up for two hundred dollars, and I was beyond being a happy camper. In high school, I continued taking band, both orchestra and the marching unit. The weird thing about being in band in high school was that a lot of fuckheads I went to school with laughed at the notion of even *being* in band, but I'll say this—the discipline and chops I absorbed during this time stuck with me for many years to come, even to this day. I thought high school sports were supposed to teach you the same thing, but all it really taught a lot of these guys was how to be a shoe-selling, Al Bundy type, which is what a lot of the guys I went to school with ended up being like, along with their ill-matched Peggy Bundy wives/baby mommas.

And, no, I don't want to hear about your near misses with sports greatness, hotshot. Just go to the back and find me these in a size twelve, would you?

Anyway, I began dicking around with other pals from school and the surrounding neighborhood, all who shared a common liking with kicking out some jams in our garages and/or bedrooms. Soon as I started playing with others, it was *on*. I had found something that I could do that no one could fuck with or take away from me and was becoming noticeably better as the months rolled on. My parents were totally supportive of my drumming and even let my pals and me throw down some roaring garage sessions, much to the dismay of a few neighbors.

I think my dad especially enjoyed having the sonic waves of rock permeate the streets surrounding our house, just to spite those in our neighborhood who were guilty of having loud teens growing up a generation before us three Drazan kids. By late high school, I was completely taken back by a band called the Ramones. My drumming immediately ventured into uncharted punk rock waters, which I found to be right up my alley in terms of aggressiveness and all-out energy. By the first year I was out of high school, I had thrown together my very first original band with some older knuckleheads I had known for awhile, and I wanted to do nothing more than practice and get out and play when I wasn't working.

After this first band fizzled out a few years later, I ponyed up some dough I had banked away for a new set of black Ludwigs I was eyeballing, and started playing with a handful of bands in the L.A. /O.C. area, but nothing lasted for more than six months. I decided to hit up Bill and Marc, some friends of mine, and we kick-started the old band they had going since high school—one I was quite fond of and had wanted to play with, especially since their drummer had recently bailed on them being the pouting bitch that he is. We hit the ground running and were on our way, playing out for a few years, even cutting some studio tracks towards the end that homeboy John Easdale of Dramarama was kind enough to come down and help out with.

Soon after, everyone went their separate ways. One of the guys moved out of state. Again, I started over, poking around for

something permanent and steady, a band that knew what the fuck they wanted, leaving the BS outside the door. And then I got the call from my pal Al G (who I also went to high school with).

Al G. was the former bassist for the ass-kicking L.A.-based band, The Living End, and he was calling to tell me that his old guitarist from The Living End (Mark Reich) was looking for a drummer for his new three-piece outfit called Cynical. I had known Mark through Al, and also knew that Mark was one of the most ripping guitarists I know, so I checked out Mark's demo he sent me, figured some shit out on it, and went down to his rehearsal lockout to give it a go.

One practice in, and it was on. Mark is one of *thee* best people I played in a band with. This is not just because he slings one gnarly guitar and shares the same sense of fucked-up humor as I do. It's because he pushed the limits of what I was used to playing in the past as far as my drums were concerned, something that any musician should strive towards. This went far with the ton of gigs we did, as well as the four full-length albums we ended up recording together over the five plus years we rocked it out, with bassists Mr. Mark Ho, aka The HoCakes, and Mr. Clinton Weinrich, aka The Torrez.

After Cynical went on an extended hiatus, both Marks Reich and Ho went on to form the powerhouse fucker-uppers Hollywood Hate, along with other seasoned punker vets Scott Wilkins, Pensacola Bob, and Suzy Homewrecker. (And Suzy, if you're reading this, get a hold of one of us, yeah? You'll be happy to know that I sat in on drums last November with the 'Hate for the Dog Patch Winos/Jaks Winter Formal gig up in San Francisco at Thee Parkside. Shit was a blast!)

Now, I know that I ain't the only one reading the pages of this magazine who's in the upper end of the age bracket, but I will say this for those who are interested in playing music or are thinking of starting up again: It's never too late to start or start back up where you left off, even if it's just rocking it out in a garage or seriously getting shit rolling hard enough to start playing out again. Music is definitely some of the best therapy one can self-medicate with, both listening to and actually playing it. I'm a firm believer



JASON ARMADILLO

To unlock the drum patterns to their songs was like a chimp trying to solve a Rubik's Cube, but this here chimp was no chump.

in it. It's one of the greatest things in the world. Yeah, it may sound like I'm some wrinkled fuck clacking my cane on a porch, but remember hotshot that we all get older as Father Time marches on. Before you know it, the chillins riding bikes on your block will be wielding a guitar or whatnot before you can say "Goodbye dirty thirties, hello filthy forties."

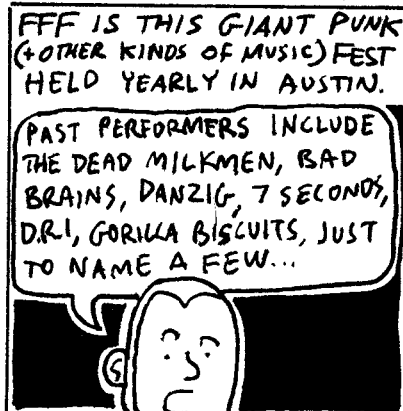
Don't get me wrong—there are a good number of those bands that continue to slog it out way past their shelf dates, but there is still a small handful that continues to bring it. Between those that continue

to bring it as well as all the newer bands that deliver the goods, there's more than enough good shite to check out. If you're one of those who complains that there's nothing good happening then you're not digging deep enough. So get yourself a bigger shovel, cocko.

Another great thing about having played with bands like Cynical, and the few steady outfits I've been involved with, is that we all shared and share the same philosophy about playing music and being in a band. The only thing that matters is what you crank out in a recording studio and onstage;

the rest is just egotistical, dick-swinging hot air. So let all the self-boasting turds blah-blah-blah on and on about themselves and worry about protecting their self-absorbed, easily-bruised egos. Life's way too damn short and rock and roll *especially* ain't got no time for that happy horseshit. Shut up and play!

I'm Against It,
—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com





WANNABE MONSTER

MY FIRST COLUMN ATTACKING BEN SNAKEPIT IN RAZORCAKE BY: LUCKY NAKAZAWA

IN BEN SNAKEPIT'S LAST COMIC (SEE R.C. #59) HE OFFERED A FEW VERY CREATIVE WAYS TO RIP OFF YOUR BARTENDER.



THAT'S COOL. I'M NOT UPSET. AFTER ALL HE DID SAY "MUCH LOVE + RESPECT."

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FUN!

* MY LIFE IN A JUGULAR VEIN WORKS GOOD FOR THE GAME.

I HAVE TO GET STONED AND MAKE OUT WITH AN EX GIRLFRIEND.



I HAVE TO GET SCABIES ON MY PENIS.



I HAVE TO SNORT COKE WITH A GIRL WHO HAS FAKE BOOBS. MAN, I'LL NEVER WIN THIS GAME!!



SORRY! NO DO OVERS

I HAVE TO GO RIDE THE GREYHOUND AND GET SICK.



I HAVE TO GET STONED AND DO NOTHING.



* IF THE PARTICULAR DAY YOUR BIRTHDAY IS ENDS WITH THE LETTER 'Y' YOU ALSO HAVE TO DRINK ALCOHOL.

GO TO YOUR J-O-B ON ADDERALL.



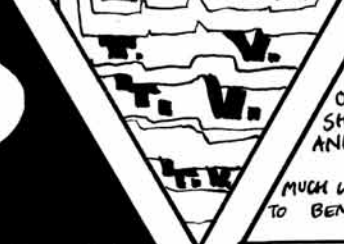
TATTOO PARTY!!!
HOORAY!!!

PUNK OVER THIRTY

BREAK UP WITH GIRLFRIEND



WATCH T.V.



* BONUS! IF YOUR BIRTHDAY LANDS ON A COMIC ABOUT YOUR BIRTHDAY YOU WIN AND EVERYONE HAS TO SHIT THEIR PANTS AND QUIT THEIR JOBS.

MUCH LOVE AND RESPECT TO BEN SNAKEPIT. -KN

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ADRIAN
CHI

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WHEN MY BROTHER MOVED OUT OF TOWN HE LEFT ME HIS CAR. I WAS SOO HAPPY!

BEEP! BEEP!



FINALLY I COULD GO WHEREVER I NEEDED TO GO, WHENEVER I NEEDED TO GO.

BUT SUDDENLY I "NEEDED" ALL SORTS OF THINGS THAT I NEVER NEEDED BEFORE.

WHERE'D YOU GO?

I NEEDED ICE CREAM

AT MIDNIGHT?

IT'S AN EMERGENCY



I NEEDED TO PAY A WHOLE NEW CATEGORY OF BILLS.



I BECAME BROKE AND LAZY - I HAD TO STOP

WHY'D YOU STOP?

I'M TIRED I CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE TACO TRUCK

IT'S ONLY TWO BLOCKS AWAY



WHEN MY OTHER BROTHER NEEDED A CAR, I WAS GLAD TO GIVE HIM ONE.

I GOTTA GET OFF THE FREEWAY

AND BACK ON YOUR FEET

CAN I HAVE A RIDE FIRST

YES



NOW I BIKE OR RIDE THE BUS TO WORK. I LIKE SITTING ON THE BUS SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE. IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M A PART OF REALITY.



PEDALING TOWARDS DOWNTOWN LATE AT NIGHT, THE CITY NEVER LOOKED THIS BEAUTIFUL FROM BEHIND THE WINDSHIELD OF A CAR.



SQUEEZE MY HORN

GARY HORNBERGER

“...the quest for convenience and saving time.”

Parking IS not in the Constitution

Here we are again, a new year and my faith in society is still teetering dangerously low.

Lately I find myself wondering why so many people feel it is okay to break the law as long as they deem it a minor infraction.

I read an article in the local paper on street sweeping and the writer seemed to be on the side of those who get ticketed. I've received a couple of tickets on street sweeping days myself because I brain farted and left my truck out, but, hell, that was my own damn fault. So I sucked it up and paid the fine. In the article, so many people were whining about getting tickets, like they had a right to defy the posted signs. I wondered, “Do these people feel that the streets should never be cleaned?” I also wonder if these are the people who own seven cars for a family of four. My driveway is dinky and we still manage to fit two cars on it and avoid the ticket. The driver's handbook states that driving is a privilege not a right, so parking (which involves driving) falls into the same category.

The other day I heard a comic ask why it was that when there is an accident, both parties get out and look at each other like it was the other's fault, which made me think hard. It seems to me that in our society everything runs on ego. Why do I get cut off on the freeway? Is it because the other guy was slightly in front of me and therefore had the right to my lane? Why is it when I go to the airport to pick someone up, so many people drive up to the curb and park even though it clearly states that one can't? I especially like when they put on their hazard lights, like a cop is that dumb. “Oh, did you just run out of gas at the international terminal?” For them, in the quest for convenience and saving time, it's alright to break the law.

The abuse of rights in this country is troubling to me.

The other day, I commented to my wife how lucky I felt that I was born into a loving middle class family and that I was healthy and could afford things. I compared that against other places that abuse power and have fleeting governments, places where others would want them dead or dismembered. Places where one just can't get ahead, no matter what. So, for me, to cry if I got a citation for something that was my own fault seems absurd. Revel in the fact that you can eat breakfast tomorrow without fear of a mob coming to take you or your things. It is true

that we here in America have a large number of liberties, but it seems that more and more we think everything is owed to us.

The system may not be perfect, but no system of law is perfect. This, however, doesn't give us the right to surround ourselves in a bubble of ego and go on a rampage defying the law, even if they fall into little white lie categories and we think that, even for that brief moment, others will simply look away. I'm watching and I'm sure that others are, too.

I've been taking some child development classes and my head reels from the ideas found in these text books. I frequently see adults using their children as shields to get what they want, but these books teach that children are to be void of wrongdoing. I understand that kids aren't one hundred percent right or wrong, but they are very manipulative, and they know how to get their way. Combine that kid with a parent of the same caliber and we've got problems. How many times have we seen a parent push to the front with a kid because they think that no one will say things bad to a child? I used to live across from an elementary school and the parents would park in all sorts of illegal positions because they had the right to pick up their child; double parking, parking in no stopping areas, or in residential driveways just so they didn't have to get their fat asses out of their cars and get their kids.

I'm hoping that in this new year someone will come up with a plan, a concept, or a book that explains the importance of taking a little time to see how these events affect communities. My hope is that people can see how lucky they are to be able to own a car, have a place to live, can give their kids an education, and feel a little less egocentric. I myself am guilty of some ego, but I don't feel big enough to let that spill over and affect others. There are others out there who have the same rights as we have. Offer them a place in line or hold a door open for another, if for no other reason than the perplexed look that will come over their faces because you did the right thing and they can't figure that out. Many were given an E ticket in life. We should look at that with great awe, show our gratitude, stop bitching, and take our lumps when things don't go right.

In closing, I was told once that in life there are lows and highs, that if there were

no lows there could be no highs. Maybe we should embrace lows because, without them, life would be boring as hell. It's all in the life cycle and if you want to have a long one, we all need to ditch the big ego.

SALMONELLA CHRONICLES, THE #3

By Ryk Martinez and Jeff Benham, \$??

This comic made absolutely no sense. I can't tell if this guy is a superhero or is just dreaming about being a superhero. The writing in the book is so confusing that I got a headache and, to a certain degree, I felt dizzy. The story seems to take place in a classroom with lots of fighting, but with the wording I'm not even sure who is good .. When the main character comes out of his funk, he learns he has punched out his teacher and a girl in his class. This book loses me with every turn of the page, which is unfortunate because I had high hopes when my wife brought it back from a trip to Arizona. If you're passing through, leave this one on the rack. (badasscomics.com, belmondotomato.com)

SUNDOGS #10

By Adam Pasion, 300 yen

I love reading *Sundogs* because it always makes me feel like I'm on the best trip imaginable to Japan. I so want to hang out with the writer and go have a beer while watching a band play. I really like how he dressed as Obama for Halloween and scared the kids. Better yet was the ride home on the train with his buddy dressed as Pikachu with a cigarette and shades scaring everyone. This book is a true romantic romp in a foreign land with all the twists, turns, and roadblocks that can pop up for a non-resident. It shows a clever picture of life in a foreign land, from raising a family, to maintaining sanity at work, and having fun going to the zoo. I always look forward to reading *Sundogs*. (biguglyrobot@gmail.com)

YO! BURBA-LINO #3

By Greg Farrell, \$??

For those of you who enjoy gag humor, this is the book. The continuing exploits of Chef Don and Earl the Squirrel are what make up the main portion of this mag. Earl is the bad guy, always making trouble for poor Chef Don. In this copy, Valentine's Day dinner is completely ruined by Earl. The book



JACKIE RUSTED

In our society everything runs on EGO.

reads as a rough Saturday morning cartoon. If you like watching toons in your footed jammies, this book will give you comfort. (yoburbalino.com)

ROCK N ROLL HALL OF FAME. THE

By some Christian church, \$ Free for your soul. I found this one on top of the vending machines at school, but I felt it should be included. I find it strange that a photocopied

book of dead rock stars has any pull in saving one's soul, but, apparently, this is the new campaign. From Cobain to Vicious and with Elvis and Bonham to boot, one can look at their deaths and somehow find god. I find it hard to believe that we mortals all live our lives as rock stars and that by living like rock stars, we need to find salvation in the lord. This book even comes with a toe tag that the reader can fill in if he/she feels they are headed down the path of Joplin.

Interpreting bible verses to make rock stars evil is not going to increase the flock of said congregation. The use of scare tactics is not the way to make someone feel the beauty of Christianity. As for rock stars, we know they don't all live the best lives. That's why there is TMZ. I always wonder why they distribute these books on college campuses.

—Gary Hornberger

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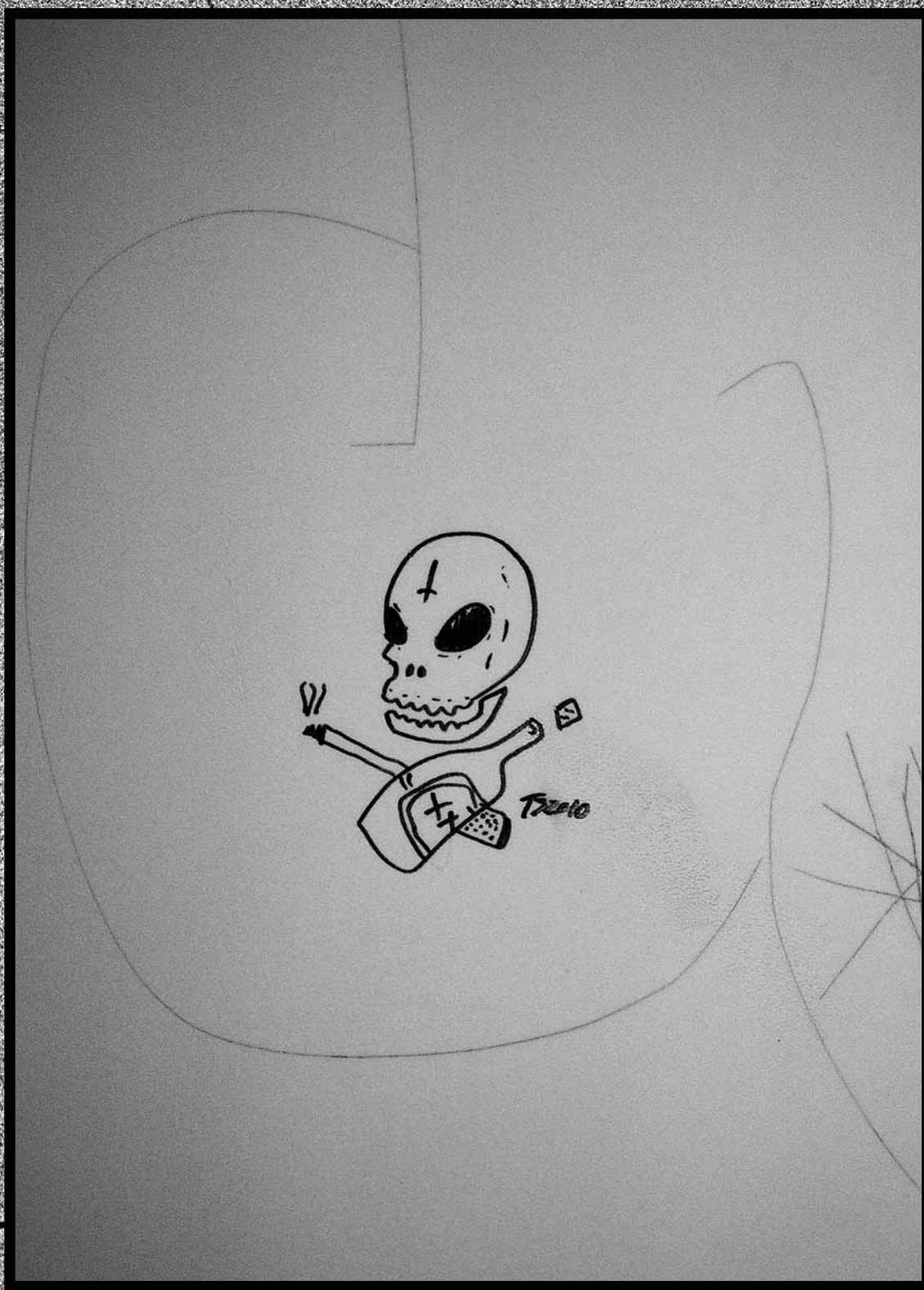


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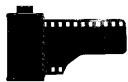
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Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page

Mike Watt and the Secondmen, San Pedro 2010

ENJOY IT, DESTROY IT: ARI UP 1962-2010

The album *Cut* by British punk band The Slits changed my life.

I am tired of hearing people talk about an album changing their life. It's become as trite as record reviews that describe music in terms of "if Band X and Band Y had a baby, it would sound like this...." So you have to know I'm serious. I'm not being lazy when I say *Cut* changed my life, I'm being sincere.

Ari Up, who was the Slits' lead vocalist and most flamboyant and recognizable member, died October 20, 2010. She was forty-eight years old. It was cancer that killed her. I read the news early in the morning and cried into my breakfast.

Ari Up was only fourteen when the Slits formed and started touring and recording. *Cut*, which is widely considered to be their iconic album, was released when Ari was seventeen years old. To listen to the expression in her voice when she sings those songs, it is hard to believe she was only a teenager when they were recorded. Though maybe you'd have to be young and fearless to alternately sing, howl, and scream with so much creativity and passion. The cover of the album is also unforgettable with Ari, guitarist Viv Albertine, and bassist Tessa Pollitt covered in mud and wearing only loincloths.

I don't know why I bought *Cut* in the first place, but I'm guessing that I heard Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill talking about it in an interview, as she often did. At the time, I was desperate for more records by female-fronted punk bands, and I bought whatever I heard about fitting that description. It was not until *Cut*, though, did I start to feel like I'd found what I was looking for. It is a brilliant mix of pop, punk, reggae, and dub, with lyrical subject matter ranging from shoplifting, to comic books, to drug addiction. The album, like the band, needs to be heard to be believed.

To describe exactly how *Cut*, in particular, and The Slits, in general, changed my life is difficult. When I bought the album I was in my early twenties, growing slowly obsessed with punk music after years of flirting with it between longer relationships with indie rock. I had recently moved to a new city and was hanging around primarily with musicians and music fans, most of whom were guys. There were girls around, but with a few exceptions they didn't want to talk about music or books. I am socially awkward at the best of times and

have a hard time appearing normal when trying to fake my way through a conversation with some musician's girlfriend with whom I had nothing in common. I spent a lot of time being anxious about my interactions. It didn't help that I wasn't a big drinker or a drug user, both behaviors pervasive in the music scene. It was disillusioning to realize that even in this group of atypical people, I still felt like a giant weirdo.

The first time I heard *Cut*'s opening track, "Instant Hit," with its spare, reggae sound and double vocal chorus asserting "*he is/ set to self destruct*," the song somehow sounded both familiar and like nothing I'd ever heard before. It, to borrow another overused phrase, *spoke to me*. The band was weird and awkward and talented and cool. They didn't fit into any of the musical categories I'd previously encountered. It almost instantly made me feel better about being weird and awkward. It was amazing to find a band whose lyrics fought against sexism and gender expectations with a grin and wink rather than a scowl and a copy of *Sexual Politics*. I instantly wanted to know everything about the band.

Ari Up was born in 1962 and raised in the midst of the British punk scene. Her mother, Nora Forster, married Jon Lydon and hung out with Joe Strummer. It was Strummer who allegedly encouraged a young Ari Up to start her own band.

It would have been predictable and easily dismissed if she'd started a band that sounded just like the Sex Pistols or The Clash and ridden the wave created by her mother, stepfather, and their famous friends. But the Slits didn't sound like The Clash and they sure didn't take after the Sex Pistols.

Instead, the band took advantage of the limbo that can happen to female performers in any established music scene. When women are regarded as unimportant and forced to dwell in the shadows of more established male performers, they are freed from a lot of the expectations heaped on others. Women faced with this experience often just disappear, but some, like Ari Up and the rest of her band, stick around and create something spectacular and different. The Slits have touched on these themes of gender division both in their lyrics (see "Typical Girls" the band's critique of women who fail to break out of gender norms) and in interviews, where they've told stories

of being on the receiving end of misogynist violence from within their own scene.

After releasing only a handful of studio albums, The Slits broke up in 1982. But there was no mellowing with age for Ari Up. She stayed active musically her whole life, both solo and through various new bands and Slits reunions. I saw her play at a small club here in Ottawa in July of 2005. The show was sparsely attended, but she performed like the room was packed. She changed outfits multiple times and mixed a whole bunch of Slits songs in with her own solo songs for a complete "punk reggae party" (her words). After the show, I did something I almost never do. I went to ask her for an autograph.

When I gave her my copy of *Cut* to sign she sighed. "That was a long time ago," she said. She had a very distinct way of talking, a mix of German, Jamaican, and English accents. "But I will sign it for you anyway." She wrote my name, signed her name and then wrote the words, "*In the beginning, there was love*" with a big arrow pointing to the photo her younger self, covered in mud and wearing a loincloth.

Like a lot of young music fans, I always thought I'd feel better about my life when I found people who loved music as much as I did. What I discovered after buying that first Slits album was that I felt better about my life when I found music that made me care less about what other people thought of me. Listening to the Slits made me feel better about not being one of the typical girls they mocked in their lyrics. That kind of thing doesn't happen very often.

Without Ari Up around, the musical world has a giant hole in it. She's not just someone who made some great albums a few decades ago. She's someone who continued to perform and create. I didn't discover the Slits until years after they'd broken up and still the fresh fearlessness of their music managed to change the way I viewed my own life. I imagine the same is true for many people. She will be missed by all of us and, no doubt, by generations of people who haven't been lucky enough to discover her music yet.

—Jennifer Whiteford

Photos by
Chris Peigler

What I discovered after buying that first Slits album was that I felt better about my life when I found music that made me care less about what other people thought of me.



Listening to the Slits made me feel better about not being one of the typical girls they mocked in their lyrics. That kind of thing doesn't happen very often.

How to Start **YOUR OWN DIY RECORD LABEL**

By **KEVIN DUNN**

Illustrations
CRAIG HORKY

Layout
TODD TAYLOR



I WAS DISCUSSING THE STATE OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY WITH A FRIEND NOT TOO LONG AGO. He was repeating the usual line that recent changes (such as the rise of digital downloading, iTunes, and file sharing) were destroying the record industry. He then pointed to the downsizing/collapse of veritable record labels like Touch And Go and Lookout! as evidence these changes were taking their toll on DIY punk as well. His logic was pretty suspect though as he used “music industry” standards of success on a culture that generally doesn’t play by accepted rules. While the major record labels are exclusively obsessed with maximizing profit, DIY punk is more interested in getting unique music out to as many people as possible at affordable prices. Hell, there is a long tradition of punk labels loaning bands money to start their own labels (Crass and Fat Wreck, for example). If that isn’t contrary to the fuck-your-competitor-over mentality of the corporate music industry, I don’t know what is.



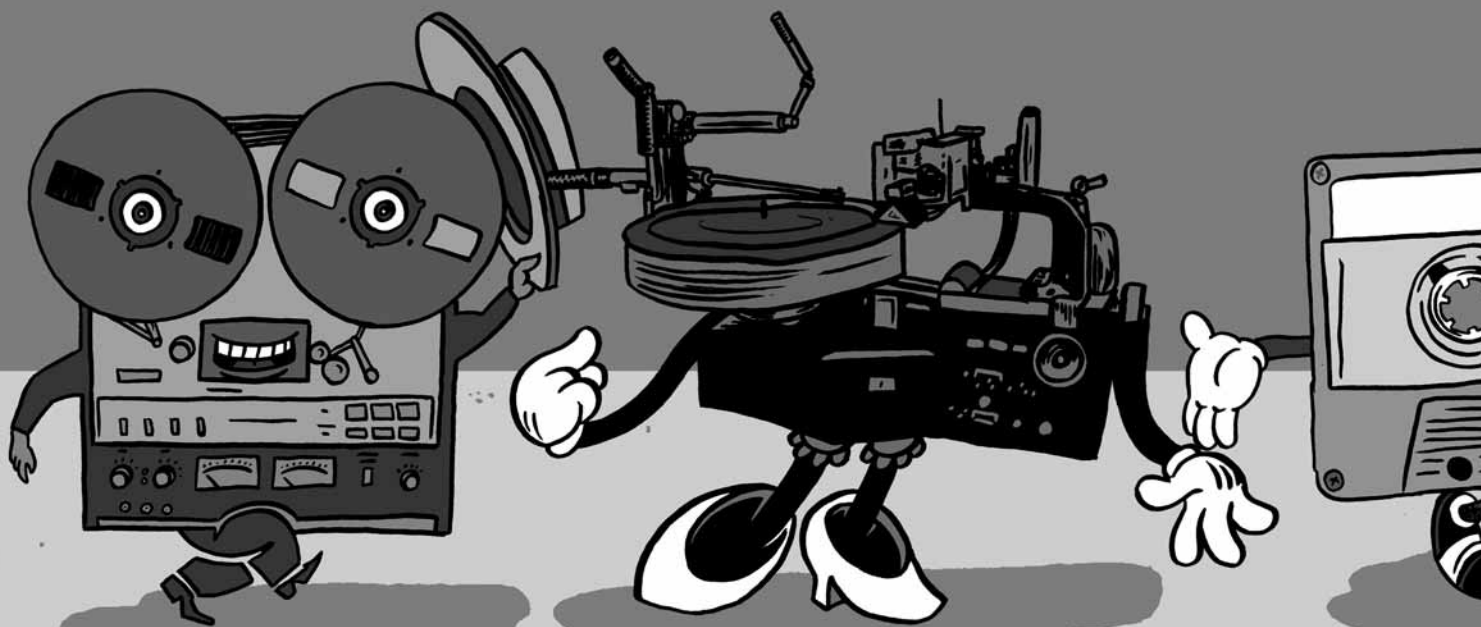
So how is the DIY record industry doing these days? I reject the notion that we should judge a DIY record label’s success in terms of profit margin, market share, or even longevity. Most label owners don’t measure their success in those terms. Why should we? DIY punk is first and foremost about spreading a form of music (punk) and a message (Do It Yourself). Open up any recent issue of *MRR*, *Razorcake*, or other zine and you’ll be heartened by the amount of music being generated these days and the ridiculously high number of DIY labels putting it out. Sure, many of them are hobby labels that may only put out a handful of releases over a few years, but that is the point. People are contributing to the community, spreading the word, and inspiring others to do it themselves. The state of DIY punk is looking pretty damn good these days.

I am currently working on a book about the political implications of global DIY punk. In many ways, this has been a long-term project. I spent the late 1980s and 1990s playing in various DIY punk bands (most of which you probably never heard of). In 1993, my North Carolina-based band formed our own record label, Girth Records. We didn’t know what the hell we were doing, but it seemed like the right thing to do—we didn’t know how to approach established labels, so why not release it ourselves? The band and label rumbled along until I finished graduate school with a PhD in political science, at which time we drifted apart and the label was shelved. Since then, most of my academic work has dealt with issues of African security and development, but after the birth of my second kid, the idea of spending long stretches of time in war zones became less attractive to me and the rest of the family. So I started writing about DIY punk culture, something I have been involved in since the early 1980s.

Part of the research I’ve been conducting includes interviews with people who run their own DIY record labels. To date, I have interviewed around a hundred DIY record labels across the globe. Most of these labels have been small labels in North America, but I’ve also interviewed labels across Europe, Latin America (mainly Mexico and Colombia), Asia (mainly China and Japan), and Australia. These interviews have been conducted face-to-face when possible, but also via phone or e-mail (and often a combination thereof). For the record, very few of the labels I approached declined to be interviewed. This is a pretty warm and open community.

During the research process, I realized I was sitting on a treasure trove of information about how to run a DIY record label, so I decided to put this essay together as a user’s guide to starting your own record label. Invigorated by the vitality of the scene and with the encouragement of several of the label owners I spoke with, I even re-activated Girth Records. While the major music industry is going through spasms and convulsions as it tries to prove its own relevance, it is clear that the underground DIY record label scene is alive and well. Entry into that underground remains incredibly easy. As the classic punk band Desperate Bicycles sang on their self-released DIY single “Handlebars” back in 1977: “It was easy, it was cheap—go and do it!”

A final word of clarification: In his 2008 sociological study *Punk Record Labels and the Struggle for Autonomy*, Alan O’Connor makes a distinction between commercial punk labels and DIY punk labels. Commercial punk labels are companies that regularly achieve sales of 20,000 to 100,000 copies, often through distribution in chain record stores and big-box stores like Wal-Mart. They usually work through a major record distributor to achieve this. In the U.S., there are four major “independent” distribution



companies that are actually owned by major record labels: Fontana (owned by Universal Music group), ADA (owned by Warner Music Group), RED (owned by Sony BMG) and Caroline (owned by EMI). Many of the commercial punk labels—Epitaph, Vagrant, Sub Pop, Fat Wreck, Equal Vision, Victory, Trustkill, BYO, Fueled By Ramen, Secretly Canadian, Bridge Nine, Mute—distribute through these “indie” distribution companies. DIY record labels, on the other hand, have much smaller record sales and distribute either directly or through “true” independent distribution companies. For this article, I am interested exclusively in DIY punk labels: record companies usually run by an individual or small group of individuals who achieve record sales far below that of the commercial punk labels.

LET'S START A LABEL!

The people who run DIY punk labels are people just like you. There is no certain type. They include young kids in high school, recent college graduates, regular folks working regular jobs, and a few who have made their label successful enough to avoid having to work for someone else. There is no specific age group that dominates the field. The people I've interviewed have been folks in their teens, twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties. They come from a wide range of educational backgrounds. Some are high school drop-outs, some graduated from college, and a few have post-graduate degrees. They also come from all socioeconomic classes, with most coming from working or middle class backgrounds. In North America, most of the people running DIY punk labels are white, but not exclusively. The most common characteristic is that most are male. Still, there are a number of women running their own record labels, too. For

example, Renae Bryant runs On The Rag Records which, for my money, has one of the best slogans ever: “Put Some Pussy in Your Punk.” The overwhelming majority of people I've spoken to have another primary form of employment, meaning the record label is something of a hobby (or a second job).

Everyone I have spoken with started their label for the love of the music, not the allure of money. Many began their label to release their own band's music. Mike Park of Asian Man Records speaks for a number of label owners when he said, “I was in a band and we just put out our own records. I wasn't looking to start a label, it just kind of happened” (7/24/2010). Yumikes, who runs the Japanese label MCR, recalled “I played in a punk band called Fuck Geez and I wanted to release our record, but we cannot find any label who can release our band record, so I decided to do it on my own label” (9/19/2010). Likewise, Andy Instigate of the Swedish label Instigate Records claimed he “couldn't think of anyone willing to release my crappy bands (and I still don't) so the only option was to do it myself” (7/25/2010).

Others wanted to become a more active participant in their scene, releasing music made by their friends. Alex, of Grave Mistake said his “main motivation was to put out records for bands from my area (at the time MD/DC) that I was either friends with or just thought were good bands that should have something on record” (8/14/2010). Ken Cheppaikode of Dirtnap was a self-described “record label geek” heavily into music even before getting into punk.

“To me, the behind-the-scenes type shit was almost as interesting as the music itself,” Cheppaikode says. “I had wanted to start a record label for at least a decade before I did it” (10/31/10).

For someone like Michal of Poland's Nickt Nic Nie Wie (NNNW) label, founded

in the 1980s under Communism, there weren't many options other than DIY: “There were really few chances for bands in 1980s to release their own record. Apart from the censorship, it required ‘connections’ of sorts. So, some small cassette labels erupted—not necessarily punk, but working in this DIY and—of course—illegal way. As there was a band connected to our crew—Ulica—and we were in touch with a lot of people by that time, we decided to try ‘doing it ourselves’” (1/4/2010). Regardless of their global location, most of the labels I've spoken with started by releasing music that either they or a close friend made. If you're thinking about starting your own label, there probably is no shortage of bands that would love to work with you.

When you start working with a band (yours or a friend's), the first thing you need are the master recordings. A few labels put money up front to cover the expense of hiring studio time and an engineer. Many labels simply assume the band will be able to generate a master recording of their music on their own.

“The bands are usually responsible for their recording, mixing, and mastering,” says On The Rag's Bryant. “I take responsibility for the cost of producing the physical product, advertising, and promotion” (10/31/2010).

Mike Riley of Firestarter Records pointed out “I'm not in a position to cover studio time, so the band covers recording costs” (8/12/2010). This is true for most of the labels interviewed.

When Robert Voogt of the Dutch straight-edge label Commitment Records started the label in the 1990s, he paid the studio costs. “These days, with the decline in sales, this is not possible anymore. Bands have to pay the studio costs,” he said. (8/21/2010). With the advent of ProTools and other music software, producing a decent recording has



If you're thinking about starting your own label, THERE PROBABLY IS NO SHORTAGE OF BANDS THAT WOULD LOVE TO WORK WITH YOU.

become affordable for most bands. If you've got money to spend on getting a quality recording, that's great. If not, don't worry about it. Chances are bands will be able to provide you with a decent master recording on their own.

FORMATS: CD vs. VINYL vs. CASSETTE vs. DIGITAL DOWNLOAD

One question you should be pondering is format for your release. Currently, there are basically four options: vinyl, CD, cassette, and digital download. When CDs were introduced, they supposedly signaled the demise of vinyl. Not everybody got that message, particularly in the DIY punk community. The overwhelming majority of DIY punk labels continue to release on vinyl. For some, this is simply the recognition that vinyl currently sells better than CDs. But for many there is a personal attachment and preference for the vinyl format. Nick Lovro of Cowabunga Records speaks for many when he effused about vinyl: "Vinyl is just great. They come in so many cool colors, the way it spins on a turntable, the sound of the needle as it hits the record, and the fact the records come in a nice cover (usually) with the cover art looking like a masterpiece or something worth owning" (8/24/2010). Jerry of Phratry Records agreed saying "There's something about the larger, vinyl format, and the fact that real humans cut the lacquers on a lathe that gives LPs and 7"s a more primitive feel. Not to mention the enjoyment of interacting with the large artwork and whatever poster-sized inserts might come with a release (i.e. The Clash's *Sandinista* or the absurdly beautiful packaging of the newest Big Business release, *Mind the Drift*). Even though it's

super expensive, and I consistently lose money on the label, I will continue to put out as much music as possible on vinyl in an effort to make something 'true'" (8/22/2010). Todd Taylor of Razorcake Records pointed out that vinyl, "doesn't suck and it never has. Nothing about it sucks. It's fragile, so you take better care of it, and that pays dividends. It's also the one format in use where the end-user can't replicate the format. (No one's making one-off vinyl record copies of their records.) Vinyl is also an investment of time and energy. Plus, no MP3 is going to go for \$100" (8/3/2010).

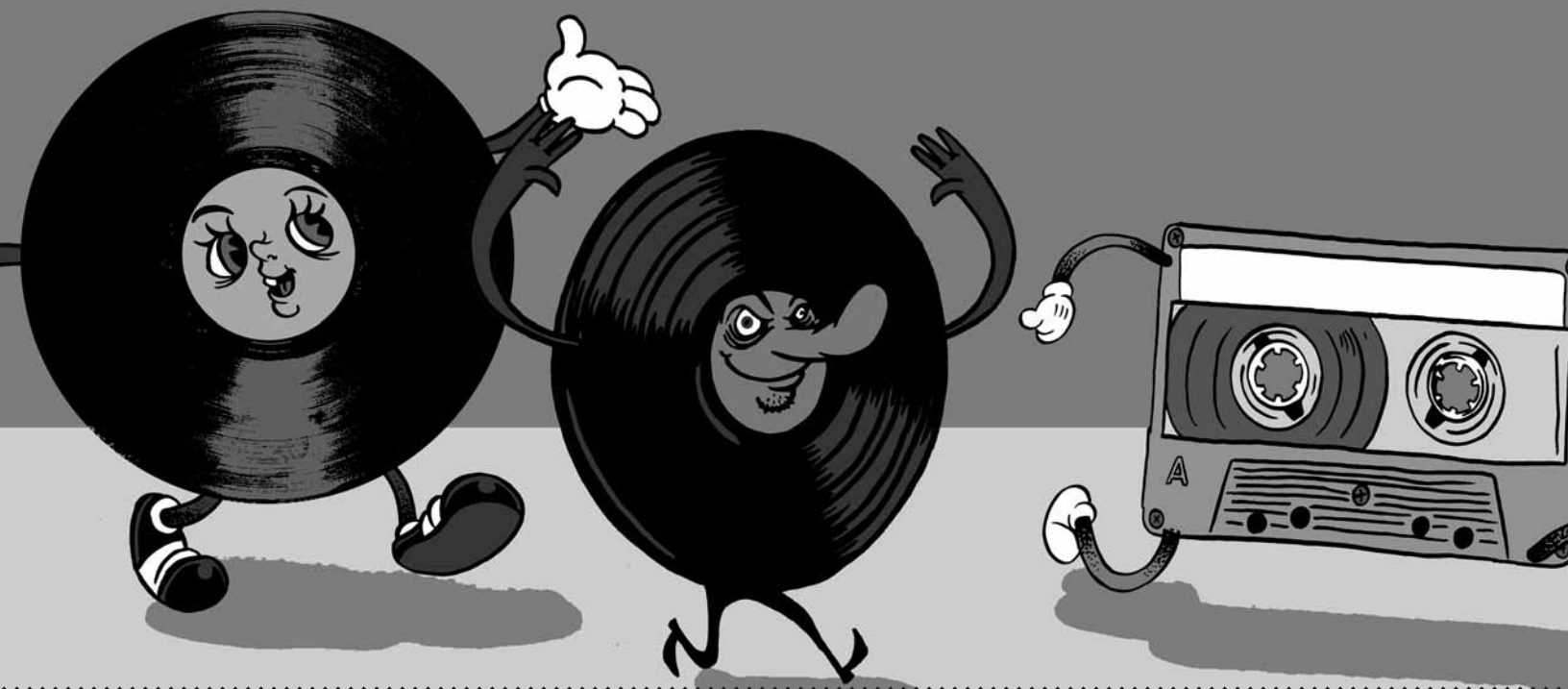
When dealing with vinyl, you have several choices, in terms of size and rpm, as well as color. A full-length 12" release fits around eighteen minutes per side at 33 1/3 rpm, twelve minutes per side at 45 rpm. With 10" releases, you get twelve minutes per side at 33 1/3 rpm, nine minutes per side at 45 rpm. And with 7" records, you can fit six minutes per side at 33 1/3 and four-and-a-half minutes at 45 rpm. Of course, you can squeeze a bit more music on any side, but the quality starts to deteriorate fairly rapidly. Some labels have a strong preference for the 7" release. Florian Helmchen of Germany's HeartFirst Records pointed out that "HeartFirst started out as a 7" only label. I will not release anything that is bigger than a 7"" (7/29/2010). But, Robert Voogt of Commitment Records argued "I think hardcore works best in small amounts. I prefer the 7" format, so I only release 7" EPs. I don't like the current trend to put only a few minutes of music on a 7" when it can easily fit ten to twelve minutes of music. That's a waste of vinyl and of people's money. Ten to twenty minutes of music works best for a hardcore band, I think" (8/21/2010).

The problem with releasing on vinyl is that it can be expensive. It is especially expensive for labels outside of the U.S.

Many foreign labels release on other formats based on economic necessity. In much of the developing world, such as in Latin America and much of Asia, vinyl is simply beyond the reach of both the label and the listeners. As Shaun of Australia's Tenzenmen Records pointed out: "Vinyl is still a little too expensive for us here in Australia, despite us having two pressing plants in the country" (7/24/2010). Yumike of Japan's MCR sees a tension between the U.S. and European punk markets and the rest of the world: "I usually use CD for release, but vinyl will be more important for a punk label. But, it's a bit hard to sell in Japan. But Europe and North American punks are not interested about CD format so much. It's a problem; to be or not to be" (9/19/2010).

The expense of releasing on vinyl comes from the set-ups, plating, and the lacquers. There are a couple of pressing plants for vinyl, and the costs are roughly the same. Let's say you want to press three hundred copies of a 7" record on basic black vinyl. You could choose between, say, United Record Pressing and Rainbo Records, but your costs are going to be roughly the same. The lacquers will cost between \$150-250. Some DIY punk labels use a third-party to set up their lacquers, like David Eck at Lucky Lacquers. His prices are competitive and he gives a level of attention you might not get from the big pressing companies. This is actually an important step that you probably don't want to screw up. "The technology for making vinyl-friendly records has been lost to a large degree, resulting in need for 'vinyl-premastering,' or the re-mastering of CDs or digital files, in order to be vinyl-friendly," Eck said. "Reference lacquers help confirm a vinyl-friendly master, before spending hundreds on the plating and test presses" (9/13/2010).

Regardless of who does your lacquer, you will also have to pay for plating, which are



the metal stampers created from the lacquers. For our theoretical 7", this will usually run between \$150-200. Pressing companies will also charge a set-up fee, especially for small runs like this one, which will usually be around \$30-\$75. The test pressing will be around \$50. If you wanted the pressing company to do your jackets or multi-colored labels, the price increases. If you want them to just do a basic label (black ink on a white label), it'll usually run between \$50-\$100. Once you do all of that, the actual pressing of the three hundred records is relatively cheap, usually around forty-eight cents per 7" (more if you want colored vinyl). When all is said and done, you've got three hundred 7" records for around \$650-700. You can photocopy your cover at a local print shop, buy some cheap plastic 7" sleeves, and invite a few friends over for a folding and packaging party. Then you are good to go with three hundred 7"s that cost you around \$2.50 each. Of course, the more copies you order, the cheaper each individual item will be. For example, if you order one thousand copies, the cost gets down to around one dollar per copy.

If you want to go the CD route, the costs are much cheaper. Depending on who you use—and there is no shortage of CD pressing plants out there—the final product will cost you anywhere between one and three dollars per copy. Usually, you just send the CD pressing company your master CD (or even upload it to their website), send them your artwork (or upload it using the templates they supply), and you are all set. An online company like Kunaki can turn your release around in a matter of days for around a dollar a CD (with no minimum order), for everything including shrink wrap. It is quick and cheap. The problem is that CDs aren't selling very well.

Brian Lombardo of Amor Y Lucha Records said he "will no longer press CDs as they don't sell, and it is not a format I am fond of" (8/12/2010). Sam Richardson of Feel It Records echoed that sentiment when he said "I will never release a CD because, in my opinion, the compact disc is a dead medium. Just look at record stores these days. CDs are sparse and vinyl is returning to the shelves" (7/31/2010). The overwhelming majority of record labels express the belief that the CD is a dead format. There are exceptions, however.

As I noted earlier, record labels outside of North America and Europe still deal with CDs. Shaun at Tenzenmen said, "with the Asian bands I'm looking more towards small-run CDs with nice packaging" (7/24/2010), largely because the CD is still an active medium in Asia. But even here in the U.S., the CD is still a functional format. As Chuck Livid of Livid Records said, "CDs are a dying medium, but they still serve a solid purpose: touring. A CD doesn't care if it's 120 degrees in your tour van. The same can't be said about vinyl" (7/22/2010).

Some labels have begun offering releases on cassette. For punk audiences in the developing world, like in Mexico or Colombia, the cassette has always been a cheap and accessible medium. In the U.S., the return of the cassette appears to be driven by nostalgia and the personal preferences of a few labels. Will at Penguin Suit Records releases on vinyl and cassette and argued that "tapes are more durable than CDs, cheaper to make, and the packaging is more fun to play with" (7/21/2010). Sam North of Traffic Street Records also releases on cassette and said, "I'm still a fan of cassettes, but I think they're best reserved for short-run, somewhat quirky kinds of projects. The live Rational Anthem radio set, for example, has been our only cassette release thus far and I think

that's the kind of thing that's well-suited to that format" (8/8/2010). If you are interested in releasing something on cassette, the costs are quite low. A company like Rainbo will duplicate the cassette, print the artwork, package it into a classic Norelco case, and shrink wrap it for between one and two dollars per copy, depending on the number ordered. The problem with the cassette format is that you may have a very limited market. Some DIY record labels absolutely loathe the cassette format. For example, Raymond Bailey of Collision Course Records said, "Cassettes I've always hated with a passion. There's no reason for them to exist, in my opinion" (7/21/2010). Mike Park of Asian Man added, "I know there's this big cassette resurgence, but I don't want any part of it" (7/24/2010).

Digital downloads have become the primary way music is listened to these days. The music industry reports that seventy percent of all music consumed in 2009 in the U.S., U.K., France, and Germany came from digital downloads, even though sales from those transactions only account for thirty-five percent of the industry's revenues. The rise of digital downloads has caused a variety of responses in the DIY punk community. Some labels simply refuse to deal with digital downloads at all. As Mike Josephson of Longshot and Meaty Beaty Records states, "I personally *hate* digital formats, so I am resisting the route of MP3 sales" (9/12/2010). Other labels have had no problem shifting to that medium. Bryon Lippincott of Kiss Of Death believes "Digital works well because it is 2010 and it makes sense that lots of people have portable ways to play digital music. I listen to digital more than anything else" (9/26/2010). A few labels have begun to release music exclusively as digital downloads, such as Digital Warfare Records.



WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, you've got three hundred 7" records for around \$650-700.

But most DIY punk labels I interviewed strike balances between the existing formats, offering releases on a variety of formats. A common practice is to put out a vinyl release with a digit download code. This can be done through the vinyl pressing plant (for example, United offers 1,000 downloads for \$225) or a third-party hosting site (the prices vary widely, as does the quality). The major digital distributor, iTunes, does not typically deal with small DIY labels. But there are options, if you are interested in going that route. An intermediary, like TuneCore, can get your releases available through iTunes, eMusic, and Amazon on Demand for a fee. One of the new bands on Girth Records wanted their single "Fuck You, Cancer" available on iTunes, so I used TuneCore. They charge an annual fee of \$9.99 per single or \$49.99 for a full album, as well as a slice of the iTunes profit. The band/label will reportedly receive around seventy cents for each iTunes sale, though I will admit to feeling more than a little uneasy about working with such a corporate behemoth as Apple. Regardless, record labels have plenty of options available to them regarding the format of their releases. One of my favorite quotes about releasing on multiple formats came from Dan Emery of Anti-Corp Records: "If lazer discs were a viable format to release albums, we would release those too. I think it's kind of elitist to overlook certain formats because they aren't 'cool enough.' I want everybody to be able to embrace our bands. Punks, metal heads, comic book nerds, old ladies at bingo halls. Everybody" (7/22/2010).

A note on artwork: regardless of the format, most of the pressing plants will print your cover artwork for a price. This can be useful in that the product you receive from the press will be the final, shrink-wrapped product. But a number of punk labels

maintain a DIY ethos when it comes to their packaging. It is easy to just photocopy your artwork yourself and slip it into the vinyl jacket, CD case, or around the cassette. The Scottish label Problem? Releases their CDs with a basic photocopied sheet that is folded in a complicated origami style. I dig that, and it keeps printing and mailing costs down, considering they ship their releases all over the world. I also respect the creativity in the DIY packaging. Rumbletowne Records, for example, released the RVIVR album with covers made from used record sleeves, folded inside out and silk-screened. Simple and very effective. Bonus points for recycling and re-using.

DISTRIBUTION

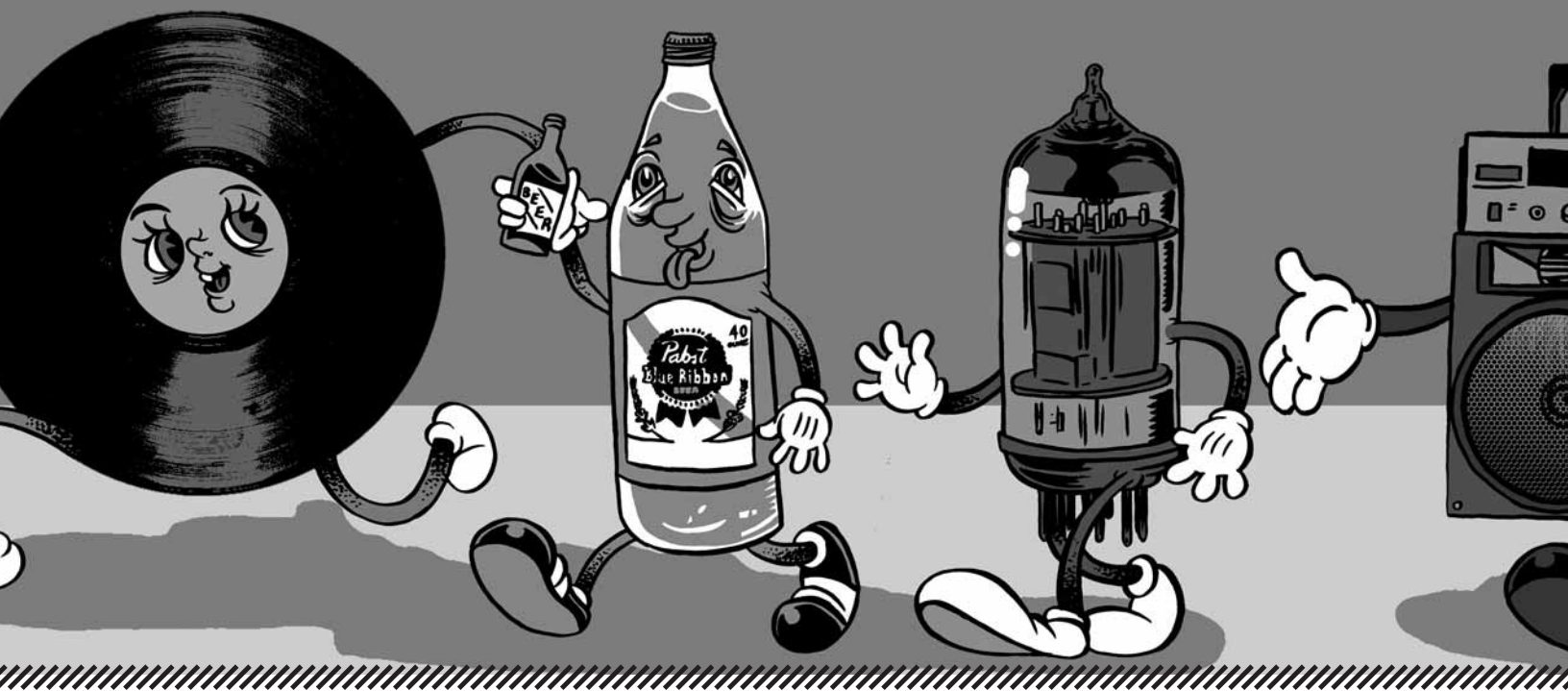
Okay, so you've got your box of three hundred 7"s. The question now is how do you get them out into the world? Corporate record labels have vast distribution networks, ensuring their releases get into record stores around the globe, particularly in the big box stores that currently make up one of the primary purchasing points for music. For the past few years, Wal-Mart, Best Buy, and Target have been the number two, three, and four top music retailers in the U.S. iTunes was number one. The ability to access these markets is a major distinction between commercial punk labels and DIY punk labels.

As I mentioned at the outset, "commercial punk labels" are companies that usually sell between 20,000 to 100,000 copies, often getting into chain records stores and big-box stores like Wal-Mart by working with large "independent" distributors that are actually owned by major record labels. This creates a rather interesting grey area in conversations about punk record labels. A punk label like Epitaph may pride itself on

being independently owned and operated. Yet, they have a distribution deal with Alternative Distribution Alliance (ADA), which is owned primarily by the Warner Music Group (Warner currently owns ninety-five percent of ADA, with SubPop owning the remaining five percent). Given the distribution of a record is the primary purpose of a record label, it can be hard to regard Epitaph (or other labels in similar situations) as truly "independent."

Often the connections are complicated and hard to see at first. For example, Dischord Records and Crass Records currently use Chicago Independent as their primary distributor. Chicago Independent in turn distributes through Fontana, which is owned by Universal. In their defense, most of these record labels maintain that the corporate-owned distribution companies have no say in the day-to-day activities of the label; the relationship is just a fact of business and has no impact on who or what bands they release. While reflecting on the complicated nature of ownership in the distribution field, Derek Hogue of G7 Welcoming Committee Records said, "We've always been hyper-aware of this, and struggled for many years with trying to find distributors who could do a good job without involving the major label-owned distributors. By now, almost every smaller distro is either owned by a major, or turns around and sells to one that is. It's pretty much impossible to avoid" (10/14/2010).

DIY punk labels generally do not operate on the same scale as commercial punk labels and, therefore, do not have direct access to these large distribution companies. Instead, they have several options available to them. At one level, there are several "true" independent distribution companies to use. These include Ebullition, Redeye, Independent Label Collective, Revelation (aka RevHQ), No Idea, and, once upon



a time, Mordam. Lumberjack Mordam's spectacular collapse was a complicated saga covered in great detail in issues #53 and 54 of *Razorcake*. Dan Phillips, who worked for Lumberjack until the very end (technically, he is still working for them to clean up the accounts), perhaps captured it best when he said the basic reason for their failure was "people making stupid decisions and being shitty" (7/30/2010). Needless to say, the way in which Lumberjack Mordam imploded, burned a lot of DIY punk labels. Hopefully important lessons were learned (lesson #1: don't be a dick; lesson #2: beware the corporate music industry; lesson #3: repeat lessons #1 and 2 endlessly).

Lumberjack Mordam's messy collapse altered the independent field in numerous ways. In some cases, many labels got burned and suffered financial losses they have not been able to recover from.

"A lot of labels got hurt with all these big distro companies going out of business," said Chuck Dietrich of Basement Records. "Everyone was owed money, but you've got to move forward and keep on picking up the pieces and putting them down somewhere else" (7/27/2010).

At the same time, several distribution companies stepped in to fill the vacuum left by Lumberjack Mordam, usually with strengthened anti-corporate, independent commitment. Two employees of Lumberjack Mordam, Jason White and Dan Phillips, began the Richmond, VA-based Independent Label Collective in 2009. The ILC, along with Ebullition, Redeye, Revelation, and No Idea represent important distribution networks for small DIY record labels. Distribution companies basically serve as a middle-man between individual record labels and retailers. They do the important legwork of getting a label's releases out into the world. Sometimes they will just order a handful

of copies of a new release. Other times they may order almost half of the pressing if they think it is a likely seller. In most cases, these "truly independent" distros are small affairs. California's Ebullition is basically a one-person operation run by Kent McClard. Florida's No Idea has a slightly larger staff, but it is still an intimate affair. In both cases, the distribution company developed from a DIY punk label.

"I had been doing a zine and a record label and if I wanted to get those things out to the world then I had to do the distribution myself," McClard said. "After a few years, it was apparent that the distribution was larger than the label" (9/29/2010).

Most DIY punk labels are small affairs and their distribution tends to be very direct. They sell their releases at shows, and perhaps at a few local indie record stores. Ryan Cappelletti of the label Punks Before Profits is a good example: "I just trade records with people and then I just bring some boxes to shows. That's my favorite part about punk: some kid with some boxes of records at a show. I got most of my records that way" (7/23/2010). For many labels, the most direct way they deal with their audience is through a website. Getting a website is fairly easy and inexpensive. You can go through a broker like GoDaddy to purchase a URL domain name (such as www.GirthRecords.com) for around twelve dollars a year. They will also host your domain for less than ten dollars a year. There are plenty of free software programs out there to help you design your own website. In conducting my research, I noticed a few DIY labels were actually using blog platforms, like WordPress or Blogger, to host their websites for free. I decided to do that with Girth Records as an experiment, and it seems to be working fine. I can post PayPal "Buy Now" buttons on the site at no cost (though PayPal does extract a fee for every transaction it handles). I used

the option of upgrading my available space to 5GB (for around twenty dollars a year) so that I can post MP3 audio files. This allows visitors to the site to hear samples of the releases they are considering buying. Very few record labels opt out of having their own websites, and even then they usually maintain a MySpace page.

One of the most important ways that DIY punk labels distribute their releases is by trading with other small DIY labels. Swapping releases is a time-honored tradition in the DIY community and it allows labels to increase their own offerings and to get their releases out to more people. Dan Emery of Anti-Corp said, "We get everything in the distro off of trades with other labels, mainly because it makes distribution work for both parties, but the financial aspect of being able to barter is also pretty cool" (7/22/2010). Sam North of Traffic Street said the most important element of their distro is trading: "I trade copies of all of my releases to all of the other DIY pop punk labels: Dead Broke, Dirt Cult, No Breaks, It's Alive, Muy Autentico, Kiss Of Death, and plenty of others. Through trading, I get my titles stocked in all of those labels' distros and webstores and also get a ton of records to sell in my own distro and webstore, which is really important in attracting people to your website and getting them to pick up your own releases. No one wants to have to pay shipping and handling on an order with a single 7", so it's important to have a huge selection of other records that they can tack on to their order" (8/8/2010).

Trading between labels is especially common for labels in different countries. Michal of the Polish NNNW label said, "We see a DIY network as our natural ecosystem, so we try to use these channels mainly. Sadly, having been ripped off some times in the past, we had to think about other ways too. Mailorder, auctions, trades—that's the reality of labels like ours. We've had problems with the biggest chain



"If lazer discs were a viable format to release albums, we would release those too... I WANT EVERYBODY TO BE ABLE TO EMBRACE OUR BANDS. Punks, metal heads, comic book nerds, old ladies at bingo halls. EVERYBODY."

Dan Emery, Anti-Corp Records

store in Poland, but we sued them and won the case. Up the punx!" (1/4/2010). Jordan Atkins of Residue Records noted the importance of trading with overseas labels when he observed, "It can take awhile to see the results of trades, but it is the best way to get records overseas and to places that are hard to get people to pay a more expensive wholesale" (7/29/2010).

A number of DIY labels also distribute through on-line stores. Amazon.com is the obvious behemoth in the market, but few DIY labels deal with it, usually because of principle, and the hefty fee they extract from each transaction. Instead, many labels use a handful of independent "one-stop" stores like Interpunk, PunknJunk, and RevHQ. These "one-stops" tend to accept copies of releases on consignment (the number varies on expectations of sales, but they'll usually take a few of an unknown release) and offer them in their online stores for a fairly minimal mark-up. Some labels prefer not to work on consignment because it is often hard to ensure that you'll get paid what you are owed. But a number of labels expressed positive experiences working with these independent online distros, such as Raymond Bailey of Collision Courses.

"Those guys can really help us little guys by making stuff available on their sites," Bailey said (7/21/2010).

These online stores have basically replaced the old pre-internet mail order system. Other labels still prefer a more direct route, such as Bobb Easterbrook at Eradicator Records who said, "I get in touch with a lot of stores and distros directly instead of going through a big one-stop distro. It's nice to know who's selling your records" (7/27/2010).

SIGNING a BAND

Okay, you've recorded your band's single, released it as a 7" on your own label,

traded it with other DIY labels, and got it into the hands of a larger distro company and various "one-stops." Now you are thinking about releasing another band on your label. This raises a couple of questions: Who are you going to release? Are you going to formalize your arrangement with them using a contract? What are the terms of the contract (or general agreement) going to be? Is there a certain identity you want your label to have?

Given that today most bands have the ability to self-release their own material, it seems that the primary purpose of a record label is to cover the production, advertising, and distribution costs that might be beyond the means of the band. Still, there remains another vital role of the record label: community building. The respected DIY punk labels tend to be those that, regardless of size, treat their bands and other labels well by fostering a sense of community. Renae Bryant of On The Rag Records also plays with the band All Or Nothing HC and she pointed out, from a band's perspective, "the only reason to be on a record label is to be a part of a community of other bands you admire and agree with their ideas. Being on a record label, in the punk world, is like being a part of another family. We co-released one of the All Or Nothing HC releases through Rodent Popsicle. It was all a handshake deal. We love Toxic Narcotic and were stoked to be a part of the family of bands Bill puts out. Being a part of this family helped us as we booked our own local shows and U.S. tours. More importantly, we made many friends through the label and shows" (10/31/2010).

The majority of record labels I've spoken with deal almost exclusively with bands they know personally. Sam Richardson of Feel It Records said that is a criterion many record labels also want.

"I only release records by bands that I

personally know at least one member of," Richardson said (7/31/2010).

The logic behind this position is further clarified by Justin Pearson of Three.One.G. Records: "Obviously we have to like the band or artist first off. But we also factor in things like our personal relationship with the musicians. That is important for a few reasons. One, typically we lose money on releases, so if we are going to put time, energy, and money into something, we want to know exactly who we are putting effort into" (8/8/2010). But for some labels, a personal connection is not always enough. Super Secret Records' Richard Lynn added, "I have to love their music. In the past I put out a couple of CDs for friends and I regretted it because I didn't love the music; it was more of a favor. Now, I have to love the music" (7/23/10).

Some labels create an identity for themselves based on the specific scene they reflect. A label like Dischord, for example, states that its goal is to help document the Washington, DC scene, so almost all of its releases are from DC-based bands. Likewise, Knw-yr-own Records only releases music by artists based in and around Anacortes, WA. Some labels are more interested in releasing music from unknown or obscure bands in foreign countries. For example, Brian Lombardoizzi started Amor Y Lucha after spending time in Chile and Argentina. His goal was to introduce listeners in the U.S. to bands in other, non-English speaking scenes.

"It was a humble attempt to combat some of the ethnocentrism that most in the U.S. have a hard time shaking off," Lombardoizzi said (8/12/2010).

Some labels are only interested in releasing certain musical subgenres of punk, such as ska, grindcore, or pop punk. Other labels deal exclusively with bands that share the same political commitment. For example, J-Lemonade runs the Polish label Emancypunkx

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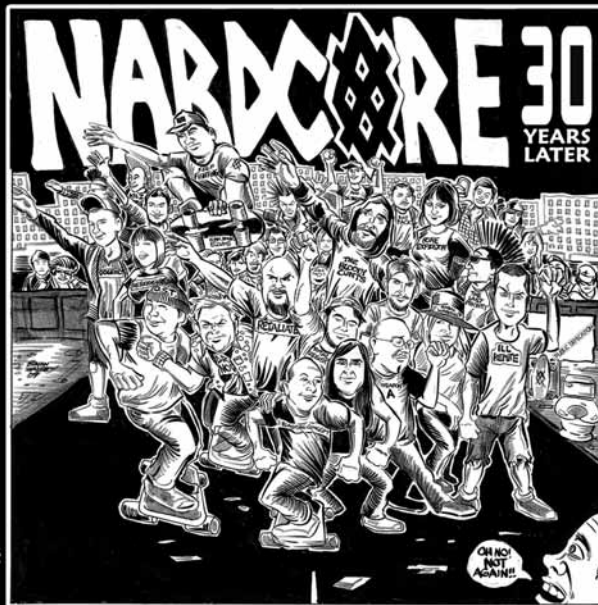
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Lumberjack Mordam imploded, burned a lot of DIY punk labels. Hopefully important lessons were learned (LESSON #1: DON'T BE A DICK; LESSON #2: BEWARE THE CORPORATE MUSIC INDUSTRY; LESSON #3: REPEAT LESSONS #1 AND 2 ENDLESSLY).

and she said that in order for her to work with a band, "it has to have women or queers involved. It has to be a non-commercial, DIY, feminist band. Preferably raw, angry hardcore/punk" (9/18/ 2010). Robert Voogt of Commitment Records said, "Commitment Records was started to promote the positive straight edge, so I want all bands that I release on the label to stand behind that idea too. I have to like the music. The bands must have a good message to share and they have to be a straight edge band. I also try to check out what kind of people are in the band. I don't want to release records by bands made up of rightwing people or of intolerant and violent people" (8/21/2010). Other labels are more pluralistic about who they are willing to work with. The New Orleans-based label Community Records, for example, is seriously dedicated to both the New Orleans scene and ska-punk, but has signed bands from outside the region and the genre. But more often than not, there are often personal connections between labels and their bands. Some labels are happy to accept demos and release something by a band they don't know personally, but those seem to be rare exceptions.

In most of my interviews, nothing seemed to inspire as strong a response than the issue of using contracts. I would say that the overwhelming majority of DIY punk labels eschew the use of contracts. Mike Park of Asian Man stated that "A contract only creates problems. If you're not happy with me, I'd rather you be able to just pull your stuff from my label without any contractual obligation" (7/24/2010). Chris at Dirt Cult said, "I don't

use contracts. It's generally a verbal agreement and a handshake. I don't generally generate enough money to worry about such things" (7/21/2010). When asked about contracts, Dan Emery of Anti-Corp responded "Absolutely not. Never will. If somebody wants to take their release elsewhere when the pressing runs out, or release something on another label, it is fully endorsed" (7/22/2010). Todd Congelliere of Recess Records said, "If something happens where a band doesn't feel right about keeping a record with me, then I don't wanna do it" (10/14/2010). Kent McClard of Ebullition added that "Contracts only have value if you intend to hire attorneys and sue people in court. I have never taken anyone to court, and I have never been taken to court. I have no intention of taking bands to court" (9/29/2010). Derek Hogue of G7 Welcoming Committee Records pointed out, "Generally, it seems unnecessary to us. Even if a band screws us over, how are we ever going to enforce a contract? We wouldn't even know how" (10/14/2010).

Some people believe there is no place for contracts in punk, including J-Lemonade of Emancypunkx.

"Cooperation in the DIY network should be based on trust," J-Lemonade said. "It's not a business" (9/18/ 2010).

Ryan Cappelletti of Punks Before Profits added, "I just think a handshake and a smile is fine. I don't care about being ripped off. I just hope they don't do it. I mean, punk to me has always been the anti-business movement. Money and contracts destroy everything." (7/23/2010). In that same vein, Will at Penguin Suit Records said, "if I can't have a

handshake deal and make it stick, they're not actually my friend and I'd rather not release it" (7/21/2010).

It should be noted that some labels use contracts, and for good reasons. Heather HellKitten at RealPunkRadio, said the label uses contracts because she believes the bands prefer them: "I do it for the band's sake. It lets them know what the deal is" (7/28/2010). Justin Pearson of Three.One.G. Records holds the same view: "Yes. So everyone is on the same page when we jump into working together. Also to make sure the artists know we typically pay a higher royalty rate than the industry standard. And lastly, if a band gets offers from larger labels, they can't just take their album from us... that seems to happen to smaller labels" (8/8/2010). Basement Records also uses contracts, as Chuck Dietrich explained, "I didn't when I first started. There was still a sense of trust and companionship amongst bands, but nowadays people sue for cutting in line at McDonalds. So I do it, but I'm proud to say I have never had to use or execute a single contract for anything, which probably amounts to over 1,000 contracts I've done" (7/27/2010).

Despite many labels aversion to signed contracts, it is clear that many of them do take the time to spell out specific expectations that the band and the label agree to. As Bird at Warbird Entertainment stated, "We don't call them contracts. Agreements? Yes, we use them. Why? So the label and the band are all on the same page and knows what each party is getting out of the deal" (7/24/2010). Said Chuck at Livid Records, "When I started the

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Most DIY punk labels lose money regularly. There is a simple reason for that: THEIR BUSINESS MODEL IS NOT ONE DEFINED BY PROFIT-MAXIMIZATION. IN THE SIMPLEST TERMS, THEY ARE INTENTIONALLY BAD CAPITALISTS. But that is often the point.

label, we did contracts. Nowadays, I prefer doing a simple three-line e-mail to all the members of the band" (7/22/2010).

Todd Taylor, at Razorcake Records, offered the following observation: "I understand many punks' aversion to business. I wholeheartedly recommend you never sign a contract that's drafted by a large corporation because they have lawyers to void that shit and put you over a barrel. But, if you all want to be on the same page with people on your level—let's be honest, many of us drink, forget, have other things on our minds—two or three pages of simple language can ease a lot of future anxiety" (8/3/2010). This is a similar position held by Jerry at Phratry Records: "I started typing out the agreements that we'd previously discussed in person, or over the phone, and I'd give copies to each band member. These written agreements are meant to serve as a reference tool that we can revisit down the line, if need be, after the verbal agreement is put into motion. If anyone ever has a question about splitting royalties, etc. it's there—on paper. I never ask for anyone's signature, but it's a backup in case anyone forgets any of the aspects of our verbal agreement" (8/22/2010).

What are the general details of these arrangements? There is slight variation among labels, but there is a general trend. The work of the bands is always privileged and protected, in the sense that they retain control over the masters and rights to the music. Dirtnap Record's Ken Cheppaikode speaks for most when he said, "the band generally retains ownership of the masters/publishing, etc., and give us an exclusive lease on them for however long we agree on" (10/31/2010). Labels tend to give the bands a percentage of the pressings, usually between fifteen to twenty percent, but occasionally as high as fifty percent. The band can do whatever they want with those copies, but they usually sell them while on tour. If the band wants more, the label will provide them at wholesale or cheaper. If there is a second pressing, the band gets another percentage of the copies or the cash equivalent. I was a little surprised at how almost every label operated along such similar terms. It seems everyone has come upon a system that works, so why screw with it?

CHALLENGES and PAY-OFFS

I don't want to paint an overly-romantic or utopian view of running a DIY label. It definitely has its challenges and downsides. When asked what they found to be the biggest challenges of running the label, the answers

varied, but a few common themes emerged.

One frequently noted challenge was deciding on whom to work with. Richard Lynn of Super Secret Records noted, "Sometimes I have to disappoint people when they ask me to put out their record and I just don't love the music. You find out quickly if they are really your friend or just trying to get you to put out their record" (7/23/10). When asked about the challenges of running Big Action Records, Zabby said, "Figuring out who I want to release the most is the biggest challenge I face. That and not getting too worked up when things don't go well or something bad happens... such as bands deciding not to show up to recording sessions I've paid for or defective vinyl coming back from the pressing plant. With no one else around to really help out, I also would have to say staying up on emails and sending out mail orders can be trying too" (8/02/2010).

In fact, perhaps the biggest challenge mentioned by most was simply having the time to dedicate to the label. Often the people running labels have a thousand things going on at once. As Dirt Cult's Chris observed, "I lead a pretty busy life between working full time, playing in several bands, running an all-ages show space, etc., so sometimes it's difficult to prioritize the label" (7/21/2010).

Part of the time required to running a label is dedicated to marketing and self-promotion, things that I am personally bad at and find distasteful. This attitude was shared by Derek Hogue of the G7 Welcoming Committee, when he observed that the biggest challenge is, "not getting discouraged with the general state of the music industry, and all the bullshit you need to engage in, in order to promote releases. We're not sales people. We don't like taking part in the hype machine. It tires us and we're bad at it" (10/14/2010).

Finally, many people mentioned that it could be difficult to sustain their interest in the label when things got slow and boring. As Will at Penguin Suit Records noted, his two biggest challenges are, "keeping up with orders when they come in a flurry, keeping interested when there's nothing getting sold" (7/21/2010).

One concern I expected to hear more in interviews was the challenge to sustain the label financially, but I was surprised at how rarely that issue came up. But let me be clear about something, most labels are not making money. A few of the people running DIY labels are able to make ends meet, either through the label itself (like Mike Park at Asian Man) or through the related distribution company (like Kent McClard of Ebullition).

Most have another job that helps pay the bills, from being a mental health therapist (Chris at Dirt Cult and Bobb at Eradicator) or a vegan chef (Ryan at Punks Before Profits), to working construction (Will at Penguin Suit and Raymond at Collision Course) or driving 18-wheelers (Bird at Warbird).

Very few labels, such as Asian Man, Basement, Big Action, Collision Course, Dirtnap, and Livid Records, said they were actually making a profit. A few were just breaking even, such as Eradicator, G7 Welcoming Committee, Razorcake Records, and Warbird Entertainment. Most DIY punk labels lose money regularly. There is a simple reason for that: their business model is not one defined by profit-maximization. In the simplest terms, they are intentionally bad capitalists. But that is often the point. In some ways, the DIY record industry can be seen as an alternative model to the greed-focused capitalist world of the corporate music industry. DIY punk labels tend to invest in bands they like, not the ones that they think are going to make them rich. They tend to price their releases so that people can afford them, rather than worrying about increasing the profit margin. As Chris Clavin's Plan-It X Records proclaimed: "If it ain't cheap, it ain't punk."

Most DIY record labels are labors of love. Bryon Lippincott of Kiss Of Death Records speaks for most folks when he said, "the label is actually like a hobby business. I do it because I love it and love the bands" (9/26/2010). Richard Lynn of Super Secret Records added, "I realized early on this wasn't going to be a big money maker. I do it because I love the bands and their music, and I want there to be a record of their music for people now and in the future to be able to listen to" (7/23/10).

For many, the goal is just to make the label self-sustaining. As On The Rag's Renae Bryant observed, "I consider the label a labor of love. It would be great to make a profit, but all I want to do it break even and put out more releases" (10/31/2010). Others take an even more stoic view, like Andy of Sweden's Instigate Records: "I've lost so much money because of this shit label. But I don't give a shit" (7/25/2010).

The point is, you probably won't get rich running your own DIY punk label. But if you've gotten this far in the article, you're probably not in it for the money in the first place. Hell, if you're reading *Razorcake*, chances are that you are already part of the converted. So why haven't you started your own DIY label yet? As the Desperate Bicycles sang back in 1977: "It was easy, it was cheap—go and do it!"

WYN DAVIS



Interview by Ryan Leach

ALBUM COVER ILLUSTRATIONS

by Alejandro Larin Baranda

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LAYOUT by Lauren Measure

Wyn Davis may not be a household name, but some of the records cut at his studio may rank among your all-time favorites. For thirty years, Wyn has owned and acted as head engineer of his studio, Total Access.

The Redondo Beach studio, which opened in December 1980, built an early rapport with Black Flag guitarist and SST Records founder Greg Ginn. Following the demise of SST's initial recording home base, Media Art, at the dawn of the 1980s, Ginn moved operations over to Total Access and a symbiotic business relationship ensued. Ginn received affordable studio time at a flat monthly rate, while Wyn was guaranteed enough money to keep Total Access's doors open. Over the course of several years, some of SST's best records were cut at the studio: The Descendents' *Milo Goes to College*, Black Flag's *My War*, Hüsker Dü's *Zen Arcade*, and the Minutemen's *Project: Mersh*.

While Wyn oversaw numerous productions and helped with engineering, Spot was the conduit between Total Access and SST. Spot introduced Wyn to punk rock and Greg Ginn and produced nearly all SST albums cut at Total Access. As the '80s turned into the '90s, SST released fewer and

fewer records. The label—which had formerly put out LPs at a breakneck pace—was entering hibernation. In the late '80s, Wyn began recording a lot of the metal bands forming around the Sunset Strip—Dokken, Guns N' Roses, and Great White all visited Total Access.

Throughout the '90s, Total Access recorded numerous groups sprouting out of Los Angeles's South Bay and Orange County scenes. Unlike the acts on SST's roster, these bands would go on to achieve mainstream success: Sublime recorded their self-titled record at Total Access and part of No Doubt's *Tragic Kingdom* was also cut at the studio. More recently, Wyn has been recording some of his childhood heroes: Black Sabbath alums Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler's recently defunct band, Heaven And Hell (RIP vocalist Ronnie James Dio) as well as groups influenced by Sublime, such as Pepper and Slightly Stoopid. Total Access, forever and proudly linked with SST, has come full circle, hosting the recording dates for Unknown Instructors recent album (a group comprised of Minutemen Mike Watt and George Hurley with Saccharine Trust's Joe Baiza on guitar).



Wyn, center | 2010

Ryan: Where were you born?

Wyn: I was born in a small town in New Jersey called Cape May Courthouse. It was in the extreme southern part of New Jersey. Shortly after I was born, my parents moved to Texas where my dad went to school. We didn't stay long. We then moved to Venice, California when I was four years old. We've been in California ever since.

Ryan: In what year did you move to Venice?

Wyn: 1959.

Ryan: I'm guessing that your musical consciousness coincided with the end of psychedelic rock in the late '60s and carried over to the birth of hard rock in the early '70s.

Wyn: My musical consciousness started in 1966. I used to listen to an AM radio station in Los Angeles called KRLA. I think it still exists but it has a different programming format now. They had a program on after their primetime hours called *Collage*, or something like that. In the mid-'60s, KRLA was playing what would become the FM playlists of the late '60s and early '70s—a lot of British Invasion bands. The radio personalities at KRLA didn't make much of themselves, but the records they played were great. Shortly after I became acquainted with KRLA, I started listening to a pirate radio station based out of Pasadena called KPCC. There's now a Pasadena City College station called KPCC, which is different. A lot of the radio personalities from KPCC would go onto another radio station called KMET. KMET was a really cutting-edge FM rock station. That's basically what I was listening to growing up. I was also surrounded by a lot of kids who were older and associated

with the counterculture of the late '60s. I'd hang out at record stores as well. I found that I shared a lot similar interests with the people who frequented and worked at record stores. I learned a lot about music through them.

Ryan: You can still find KRLA compilations at used record stores.
Wyn: You do.

Ryan: Which record stores would you frequent?

Wyn: I can't remember the name of the stores. But the guy who ran them—his daughter was Terri Nunn (later of new wave band Berlin fame). Anyway, her dad owned three or four record stores in the San Fernando Valley. My parents had moved from Venice to the Valley to get a little piece of suburbia, so I'd go to his stores. I'm still in touch with one of the guys who worked there. The first records I bought with my own money were *Blonde on Blonde* and *Electric Ladyland*.

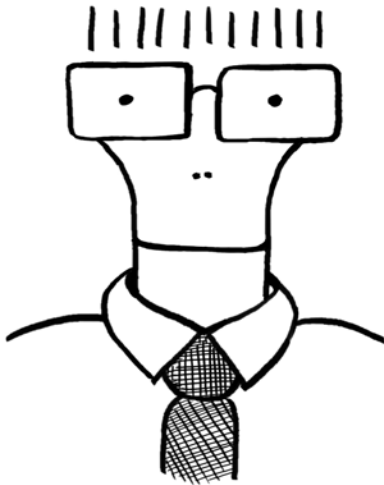
Ryan: I'm curious about the record stores you were going to because there were so many outstanding ones in the '70s. Licorice Pizza and Bomp! on Laurel Canyon come to mind. It's sad that most record stores today are solely built around consumption whereas before they were mini-cultural hubs.

Wyn: Everything is big box now. It's hard to find any independent stores these days. You're right; that old scene is gone. Those smaller stores that didn't have the distraction of all the other media stuff in them—where it was all about exposing music—made for a very interesting and compelling environment for those looking to browse and search out new music. Back then, you could spend all day in a record store, analyzing records and reading magazines.

Sometimes the guy behind the counter would be helpful, other times he wouldn't.

Ryan: When did you start recording music?

Wyn: Like a lot of young men in the late '60s, I picked up a guitar and tried to learn how to play it. I had some success. My dad's side of the family had a technical geekiness to them. They were stereophiles. They had nice stereo gear and reel-to-reels. None of them were directly involved in the recording industry. However, my dad was peripherally involved in a strange way. He was the executive secretary of the American Federation of Radio and Television Artists. They're a labor union that represents singers and voice talents. Through that side of the family I had gotten interested in recording. I'd hook up reel-to-reel decks and record music off of the radio. I'd then start editing the tape and creating my own playlists. I'd cut out the talking and commercials and have my own radio show, so to speak.



The guys in punk rock were
PRETTY FUCKING CRAZY.
They were **LIVING LIFE**
LIKE IT WAS GOING TO
END TOMORROW.



Ryan: Were you recording bands before punk or did the movement provide the impetus needed?

Wyn: As unhip as it sounds, my consciousness of punk rock was totally given to me by the kids in the Hermosa Beach scene. While I was working at recording my own brand of '70s crap, Black Flag and the Descendents were sort of coalescing at The Church in Hermosa (The Church was on Pier Avenue. Black Flag was interviewed there in 1981's *Decline of Western Civilization*). Media Art was located right next to The Church.

Ryan: Media Art was where Black Flag recorded their *Nervous Breakdown* EP (1978), correct?

Wyn: That's right. Spot worked on it. Spot was employed at Media Art. (Spot's legal name is Glen Lockett. He'd go on to produce numerous SST albums.) He really made me aware of punk rock and introduced me to the guys at SST. The Hermosa Theatre is still around—at least the building is still standing. It had gone through many incarnations. In the late '70s and early '80s it was made into a venue where punk bands would play. I didn't really plug into the British scene or anything. I didn't follow the Sex Pistols in 1977. I only started paying attention to punk rock when it started happening right in front of me. The guys in punk rock were pretty fucking crazy. They were living life like it was going to end tomorrow.

Ryan: Can you talk about your association with SST?

Wyn: That was big for me. I think my association with SST helped them out a lot, too. Media Art, which was SST's home-base studio, closed because the partners had a falling out. One of the guys was heavily into drugs. I believe Media Art was where SST would have recorded everything had it not shutdown. It was local—which was important to SST—and (SST Founder) Greg Ginn had a good rapport with the people who worked there. Around the time that Media Art was closing, as sort of a desperation measure, I found a place where I could record my own music with my then-current band. I thought that if I got a place and recorded other bands, I could cover my recording costs. I was wrong. I named the studio Total Access. One of the first guys to come in was Greg Ginn. He said, "Listen, I'll give you a lot of business if you can give me a good rate. We'll pay you so much every month." In that agreement, we helped each other out. I had a regular source of income to help me pay for the studio and he had a fixed rate which helped him with future releases. Greg knew exactly how much it would cost to produce an album. He could see whether his expenditure was justified by having a fixed cost. It enabled him to project with greater certainty whether he could make his money back.

Ryan: Greg was very analytical.

Wyn: I don't think he could have done it otherwise. Greg was like a shaman. He saw that the excesses associated with other labels were impossible to maintain for the kind of music he wanted to record and release. He had to work it the way he did. In making it work his way, it put some pressure and constraints on the SST bands. It had a great influence on the way records came out. Greg would basically tell people, "Get your record done and recorded in this amount of time. Whatever you get down, that's your record." A great example of that would be Hüsker Dü. Spot produced them at Total Access. I remember Hüsker Dü's van pulled up and these ratty guys flopped out. It was like they came out of a cartoon. Hüsker Dü had driven all the way out from Minnesota. They had something like two days to make this record.

Ryan: This was the recording session for *Zen Arcade* (1984)?

Wyn: Yeah. Hüsker Dü immediately came into the studio. I helped Spot set up, align the tape recorders. They got going. It was already late by the time they started. The band knew they had limited studio time. I left Total Access and went home. When I came back the next day, everybody was in exactly the same spot as they were when I



Wyn, right | circa 1980

left, except they were asleep. Grant Hart was asleep at his drum kit. Greg Norton was sleeping in the control room on the floor with his bass; Spot was in the same room, asleep at the console.

I woke everyone up by saying, "Hey, guys, you must be tired." Spot lifted his head and said through the talkback, "Okay, guys, let's go." Hüsker Dü just started playing and began recording immediately. It was like Spot had just turned their switches on. They continued to play and made the record in days. There was no time to stand back and evaluate what they were doing. The band just did what they did as fast as they possibly could. Part of what's beautiful about *Zen Arcade* is the way Hüsker Dü recorded it. I'm not one of those people who believe that the album couldn't have been better under any circumstance. Those guys were extremely creative and driven. I'm certain that they may have been able to make a different product. But they made *Zen Arcade* with the time afforded to them and it's awesome.

Ryan: With the exception of a few tracks, *Zen Arcade* is all first takes.

Wyn: It had to have been. With the exceptions of a few false starts, they were all first takes. I wasn't present for the whole thing, but there definitely weren't a lot of overdubs. There might have been the occasional fix, correcting a mistake. But the album was essentially done live. The record was recorded so quickly.

Ryan: It's a double album recorded in two days and a high watermark of '80s hardcore.

Wyn: Unbelievable. Greg Ginn's goal was to put out as much product as he could for as little money as possible. He wanted to recoup his investment. Record companies are often looked at as evil and they pretty much are evil. But when you try to start one, you understand how difficult it is to stay in business and get people to buy records. Nowadays it's nearly impossible to get people to buy records. People don't even think they should pay for music anymore.

Ryan: Can you describe a "typical" SST session? It wasn't unheard of for an EP to be cut after three days of recording. On average, though, how much time would a group spend in the studio? Were these largely graveyard shifts to cut down on overhead? Were SST sessions elongated lockouts where the band would cut a record in two or three straight days—in the vein of *Zen Arcade*—or was that a rather exceptional circumstance?

Wyn: Hüsker Dü and *Zen Arcade* were exceptional in that they were exceptional people making music that was a whole level above most of the music similarly expressed during that period. The session structure, however, was pretty much the way Greg Ginn set up most of the projects he and Spot did here. They were quick, all in, stripped to the bone of all but the absolute most essential costs. The schedules were relentless and the bands had to make it happen in a prescribed amount of time: no excuses, no overtime, no overruns.



**Greg Ginn's goal was to
PUT OUT AS MUCH
PRODUCT AS HE COULD
for as little money as possible.
He wanted to
RECOUP HIS INVESTMENT.**

I think Greg's band Black Flag got a bit more "leisurely" pace. Like, they made an album in four days instead of two. Amazingly, though, I believe Greg had the foresight to realize that spending money on tape was a good investment. I believe many of those albums still exist on their original multi-track analog reels. This was in opposition to what many "cost conscious" people were doing at the time; recording over and over on the same piece of tape, thereby losing the originally recorded performance source material forever.

Ryan: Digressing back a bit, can you tell me about the origins of your studio? Did you take over a preexisting studio?

Wynn: I took over a studio that was sort of half built. The place was called Redondo Pacific. It was the brainchild of a bunch of South Bay real estate investors and a guy who was into recording music. This particular individual sort of talked these affluent real estate investors into backing him with his idea of opening up a studio. It was the late '70s and it must have seemed like a glamorous thing to do. In time, the guy who was in charge of Redondo Pacific ended up blowing a lot of money on drugs. Cocaine was really prevalent in the South Bay in the late '70s. Lease payments were not made and the place went into receivership.

That's when I discovered it. I was able to convince one of the primary investors to get everyone else to release their interest in the studio. He and I went into a partnership. For very little money, we were able to assume the responsibilities on the leases attached to the equipment and sell what we didn't need. We started the studio over again. All my partner cared about was getting the studio back in shape so his credit wasn't trashed. He had other businesses. I was looking to find a studio I could have as a home base.

Ryan: I take it that you inherited some great equipment.

Wynn: We had better equipment than Media Art. It seemed really big when I got here. But, in retrospect, it was fairly modest. It was very well-equipped for its location, but there wasn't really much equipment. Ironically, the equipment that I obtained back then is worth more now—as it's considered classic and collectable—but it was a continuing process of upgrading gear to meet the demands of producers and artists working here.

Ryan: A lot seminal bands on SST recorded at your studio. Besides Hüsker Dü, the Meat Puppets (*Up on the Sun*), the Minutemen (*Project: Mersh*), Black Flag (*My War*) and the Descendents (*Milo Goes to College*) all cut records at Total Access. Were your musical interests akin to the music these groups were making—punk and hardcore? Or, were your more rooted in the late '60s British Invasion and psychedelic sounds?

Wynn: I was into the music of the late '60s. Hardcore was interesting to me because it had so much energy, but I wasn't as fascinated by it at a social level because I had already grown up during the Vietnam War. That movement expressed my displeasure with the culture I was living in. There were a lot of people my age who plugged into hardcore, but I tend to think that that group maybe didn't express themselves in their time. By the time punk came in, it was another form of protest for another generation. It was a fight again the vacuity of '70s music. My interests in the early '80s were really wrapped up in trying to make the studio work and in developing personal skills that could be useful as a professional audio services provider.

Ryan: Can you describe Spot (Glen) and the role he played at SST and Total Access?

Wynn: I had worked with Spot at Media Arts. Glen was and probably still is a high-energy person with an extremely varied set of interests. At the time I met him, he was not only an engineer working with a lot of the cutting edge bands of the day, but he also was a photo journalist/photo documentarian. He captured a lot of the spirit of what was going on in the South Bay at the time and I'm sure he must have an amazing collection of pictures. Despite the increasing interest over the years in his role as engineer of many of these important recordings, Spot, as far as I can tell, has maintained a fairly low profile, preferring to focus on what he is doing rather than on what he's done. That squares pretty well with the person I knew. As for Spot's role at SST and Total Access, there is no doubt whatsoever that without him the records made here would not have happened. There was no one around at the time with the energy, enthusiasm, and sensitivity to do the work he did. It is no exaggeration to say that without Spot there almost certainly would not have been any SST history at Total Access.

Ryan: By the late '80s SST was winding down. By the mid '90s it was essentially dormant.

Wynn: SST was pretty much done by that point. All the work we did with Black Flag and the other SST bands was done by 1990.

Ryan: Outside of the well-known SST groups, what were some of the lesser-known bands you enjoyed working with?

Wynn: One of the coolest bands to come through was Saint Vitus. They were like Black Sabbath in slow motion. I thought it was pretty cool that Greg was working with them. They were very heavy. All of their stuff had a slow tempo. They're actually still performing.

Ryan: When was the last time you saw Greg Ginn?

Wynn: I saw Greg about six years ago. It was really great to see him again. He was happy to see me. He walked me through his SST warehouse out in Long Beach where he has his cat rescue and SST mailorder. He gave me all the records that we had made together. Working with SST was a great period for the studio. We were both just getting started. It was a funny time as well. The hair metal era was just starting. We had punk bands passing these metal kids by at the studio with boxes of Aqua Net mixed in with their gear. There were two parallel universes existing. One was hardcore punk; the other was the beginning of the Sunset Strip scene.

Ryan: That was the transitional period that occurred in the mid-'80s where the rock scene in Los Angeles switched from punk to metal. It's sandwiched between Penelope Spheeris's first two

Decline of Western Civilization films. Some garage and punk bands actually went the metal route. Paula Pierce's group The Pandoras comes to mind.

Wyn: Yeah. That's true.

Ryan: You ended up recording a lot of those late '80s metal records.

Wyn: A lot of those records came through here. Many local people became involved in the metal scene. The now-infamous Great White recorded about five records here. Dokken and Guns N' Roses came through as well. One of the producers in residency here went on to produce even more of that stuff after he left. His name is Michael Wagener. He ended up mixing the first Metallica record. He also did Poison and Skid Row.

Ryan: We're talking about punk and metal as being sort of two different versions of rock with different cliques. While there are some differences between these two genres and scenes, they're also rooted in glam rock and traditional rock'n'roll. Nevertheless, you recorded Level 42 who I imagine has no interest in metal or punk recordings. Certainly their desired sound is a lot different than what Hüsker Dü had in mind with *Zen Arcade*. How were you bridging this huge gulf?

Wyn: The studio business is like any other business. You're looking for the customers who are paying the most, the fastest, and the most consistently. While we were doing this stuff with SST, we were trying to nurture any relationship we could with other record labels and producers. We did the big money records so we could expand the facility. The smaller bands quite often benefited the most from this arrangement.

Every time a punk band would come in here, there would be something new for them to use, and they were still paying the same rates. That was sort of a dodgy situation for a while. I always worried that these punk guys would talk with the other artists about their rates. The metal groups would be paying four times the amount as the punk bands. I could see where that would piss off the more established artists with major label backing. Luckily, I found out that the cultural divide between hardcore punk and metal was pretty big and that the two scenes never really communicated to one another. They pretty much despised each other.

Ryan: You referenced the drop in record sales earlier. I'm curious of your views on the vast technological changes you've seen over the last thirty years, running Total Access. You've gone from cutting up old analog tape as a kid to the era of ProTools and the internet. Some hyper-intelligent scholars—from Karl Marx to Neil Postman—have viewed technological change with deep skepticism. I believe Postman's major grievance with technological advances were the harmful effects they brought upon an unwilling or benighted society. Essentially, people will produce products for capitalist advancement without taking into consideration how these advances affect society. Moral questions are never really raised. You've worked with a lot of grassroots labels and I know this is a hard time for you and a lot of other people in the recording business.

Wyn: The biggest and most important change—beyond any kind of recording technology—is the erosion of intellectual property rights. Someone just wrote a book that was an argument against intellectual property rights. His idea is that knowledge belongs to everybody. That's one side of the argument. But not too long ago, people bought records. It's a different environment now. It's incredibly hard to run a label. We deal with very small labels. They're still around. However, many people nowadays feel that it's okay to receive music without paying for it. The justification for starting a label is harder to come by with that mentality. That's changed the geometry of the musical business universe.

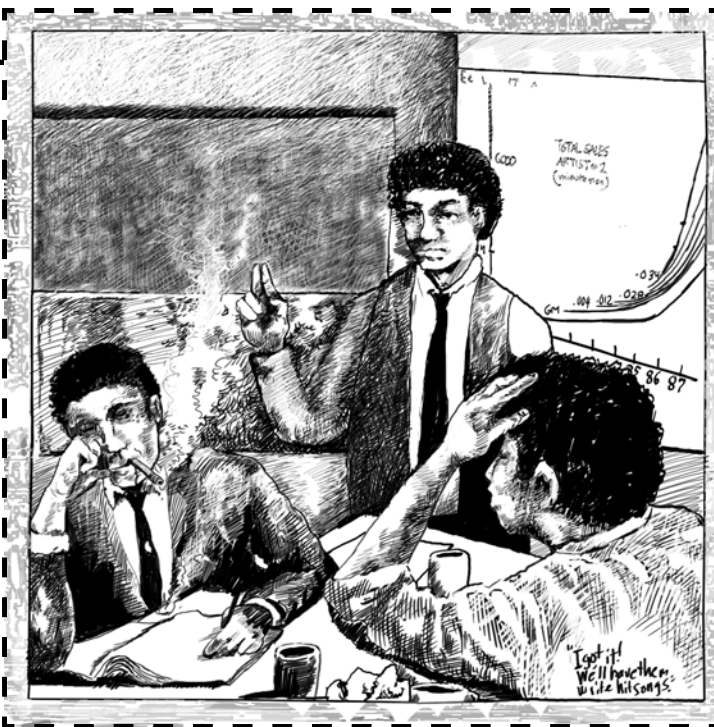
I honestly think in the future it will be good. But for us caught in this transitional period, it is very hard to maintain a presence. The motivation for making music shouldn't be a career choice. I don't think people should get into music as a way to avoid being a lawyer or a dentist: "Let me try music for a while and see how it pans out." I feel that the greatest music has been made by people who'd be making it irrespective of the financial incentive. But that doesn't mean the financial reward should be taken away. If someone creates

something compelling they should be able to make a living off of it. Sites with peer-to-peer file sharing really discourage people from purchasing music.

Ironically, record companies—morons that they are—really shot themselves in the foot decades ago. I remember the first time someone described a CD to me. My instant reaction was, "If they create CDs, that'll be it. Everything's going to change. You'll never be able to keep people from duplicating that." Now that you have a digital file—that doesn't need to be played back in real time, that can be instantly replicated and distributed—it changed the whole business. There are some people profiting greatly off of this. But for someone like me, it has been very difficult to keep going at times. Once the record labels let that genie out of the bottle, it was out for good.

Ryan: Ironically, back in the early '80s CBS was placing "Home Taping Kills Music" stickers on their LPs. But using analog tapes to record music took some time. It was somewhat labor intensive. You were working with tactile materials and typically needed access to a master copy LP or cassette. It took dedication whereas now music is treated by some people as muzak they load onto their iPods. I only buy LPs and cassettes. Album art has suffered and how people conceptualize music—song order or the idea of a two-sided record—has changed for the worse.

Mike Watt: The Minutemen did *Project: Mersh* at Total Access with Spot and Joe Carducci producing. It's a great pad and Wyn was very kind to us. I remember us Minutemen enjoying making our record there very much. A couple of years ago I made an album at Total Access for the third Unknown Instructors album and it was also a very happening time there—like twenty years later but still such a cool pad to conjure music at. I got to talk to Ronnie James Dio for a bit there. He was doing a project at Total Access as well. What a great cat Dio was. I have much respect for him.



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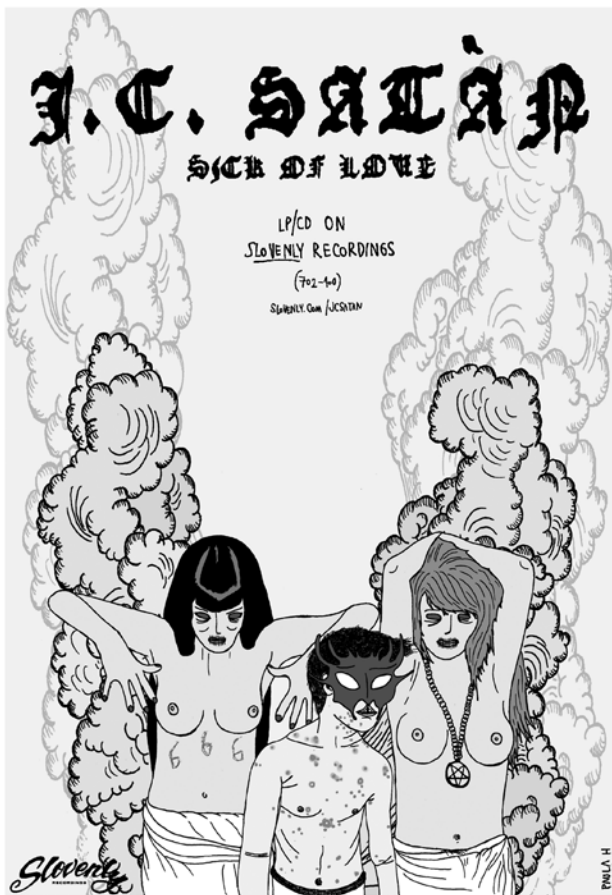
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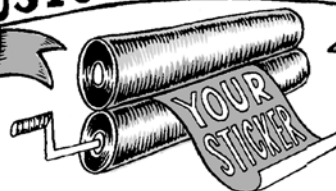
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Wyn: You know you could actually make thousands of cassette copies. There were places back in the '80s where you could get duplications of cassettes done. It would take a couple of days. Apogee in Santa Monica used to do it; they now supply digital converters for professional recording platforms. I know this is not the argument you're making, but a lot of people reference the fact that cassette tapes didn't kill the recording industry, contrary to what the recording industry was telling people. People use this as proof that turning music into a file isn't harmful. There's no longer a limit to the duplication, though.

Ryan: My position, though, is that to the laity, analog tape duplication was labor intensive and you were using tactile objects to store music. Production was finite.

Wyn: Yeah. I used to tape stuff as well. I would tape stuff off of the radio. You had to sit there and time the song or it'd be cut off. You had to be a dedicated person, recording stuff in real time whether off of the radio or perusing your buddy's LP collection. Record companies continued to expand their sales for thirty years after the cassette was introduced. They made record profits during the era of the cassette tape. What happened was that in their quest to resell us everything again in the form of CDs, someone forgot to tell them that once you turn this into a digital file that's going to be the end of your control of it.

Ryan: It's an interesting point that you bring up. A lot of CD sales are or were reissues. Only a small minority of records have been reissued on CD, and they're obviously the most successful ones in terms of past sales. A lot of people don't look at the current situation of file sharing as something set in motion nearly a quarter of a century ago when CDs hit the market. I think 1991 was the year CDs first outsold vinyl.

Wyn: Obviously with the aid of the Internet. Look at the biggest selling records of this year. They were a bunch of Beatles reissues. It doesn't stop. Major labels are still selling their back catalogue. The difference now is that the Beatles reissues are selling two million copies—that's a big deal. Go back to *Billboard* and look at 1990. The number of platinum records was huge. You'd see little pyramids with fours, fives, and nines next to them. Those numbers stood for millions of copies sold. And those are just tracked album sales inside a SoundScan database. That doesn't include the mom and pop stores.

At this moment in time, all media outlets are trying to figure out how to monetize their efforts. In some ways, these new advances could be really great in breaking down all those giant companies and maybe bring back an era when people were making music for its own sake. We're at a point again where everything offered to people in mass quantities is so absolutely vapid. It's so ripe for someone to come along with something great to fill that void. I just don't know what or who it's going to be. I do think it will come from the internet. The whole thing that has caused the destruction of the music business—the one that I grew up with—could also be the source of musical rebirth. But it's a very difficult time right now.

Ryan: You were very active in the '90s. What were some highlights for you and your studio?

Wyn: The studio partnered with a British Artist Manager Alan Niven in the mid- to late '80s. He managed the career of Guns 'N Roses through their meteoric rise and history-making record, *Appetite for Destruction*. It was exciting and enlightening. It impressed forever in my mind the singular power of music has to elevate and then destroy. Many of the most memorable moments for me at Total Access are strange events lost to obscurity.

For instance, the evening I sat with Bradley Nowell and discussed why he should not be taking chances with street drugs since he had so much to look forward to. That night I felt sure I had made a lasting impression on Bradley about his good fortune to have a great record deal, a new daughter, and a voice most people would give both arms for. (Bradley OD'd on heroin, May 25, 1996.) Or, meeting a very young Gwen Stefani and thinking, "This is a great bunch of hard-working kids. (No Doubt) Too bad they'll never go anywhere." Truth is, I love my job. Every day I get up and look forward to coming to work and that's the way it has been for over thirty years.



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The real highlights are things like pulling up to a stoplight and realizing the car next to you is blasting an album that was being mixed at the studio a week before or making a record no one ever heard of and then getting a letter from someone in a place halfway around the world telling me how much they enjoy listening to the music I thought no one ever heard.

Ryan: What's going on with your studio at the moment?

Wyn: Right now we're working with a whole list of legacy bands. Actually, some of the people I grew up listening to I'm working with. I just did a record this year with a heavy metal band that was a descendant of Black Sabbath called Heaven And Hell. It's with Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler. I've done some stuff with the epitome of late '80s corporate rock, Foreigner. We're also doing some stuff with some young bands that are in the skate punk and ska mold. Bands like Pepper and Slightly Stoopid. That's what we're busy with at the moment.

Red Dons





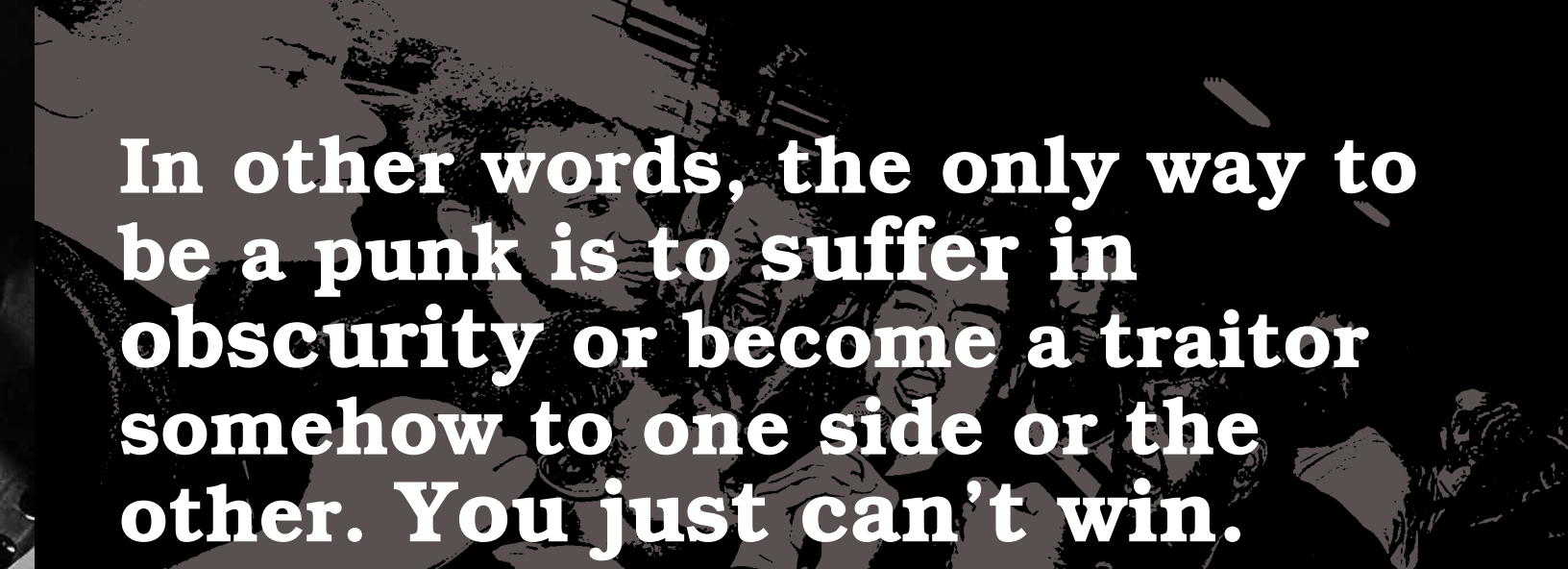
It's rare that three-plus decades into punk's existence a band would emerge with a sound and aesthetic treading a path not already well worn by scores of predecessors and a relevance not based on the same struggles sung in the songs of the past.

Red Dons is a lesson in anthropology. They're a glimpse into a world commonly overlooked by the North American punk rock community and by most North Americans in general. Drawing thematically on the harrowing personal experiences of Middle Eastern life during wartime from the viewpoint of a non-military American, while utilizing elements of Eastern visual and musical art, Red Dons builds upon its foundation of past projects with an exotic slant, offering an original urgency and desperation, while confronting the relative safety of a genre once known principally for its danger.

Douglas Burns: Vocals/Guitar
Daniel "Hajji" Sayer: Bass
Will Kinser: Guitar
Richie Joachim: Drums

Interview by Dave Williams
Photos by Mateus Mondini,
<http://flickr.com/photos/mateuspatche/>
Layout by Daryl Gussin





In other words, the only way to be a punk is to suffer in obscurity or become a traitor somehow to one side or the other. You just can't win.

Dave: Okay, so while *Red Dawn* was undoubtedly a cinematic triumph, it *has* occurred to me that perhaps you're less interested in the on-screen chemistry of Swayze and Sheen than you are in the more infamous Red Dons or Cambridge Four, the British spies arrested for relaying information to the Soviets during World War II. Am I safe in assuming there's a political significance to your name choice and its "treasonous" overtones?

Hajji: The Cambridge Four (A ring of British communist spies who attended Cambridge University, recruited by the Russians, to pass information to the Soviet Union during World War II and into the early 1950s) are kind of anti-heroes in a paradoxical way. They were trying to do what they thought was the best way to fight the Nazis: informing the Soviets because they were the only ones powerful enough to combat them. In doing so, they alienated themselves from their homeland. They may be considered heroes to some extent in the Soviet Union—but who is going to trust a spy? In reality, they are traitors. Whichever way you look at it, it was a failure. They tried to do their best to save a dying world, only to be rejected by it.

Dave: And that's a notion that hit close to home?

Hajji: In some ways it's a similar relationship in punk. You do everything yourself, remove the major labels, influences, managers, bookers, and promotion networks. You form an underground, build your own networks, you start to become a cogent movement that's more than just a bunch of kids making music in their garages. Eventually, you become what you despise, tempted by major distribution, using Myspace... Worst of all, if you manage to break out of your town and tour and sell enough records to pay for your gas, you come dangerously close to alienating your own audience because now you're selling out. In other words, the only way to be a punk is to suffer in obscurity or become a traitor somehow to one side or the other. You just can't win. To us, the sense of futility mixed with the urge to do something for your music resonated with the paradox of the Red Dons.

Dave: Have there been any negative reactions to aligning yourself with aesthetics or ideologies that aren't necessarily embraced by your typical American citizen? Not only is your name a reference to a band of communist rebels, but also the visual aesthetic employed on all of your releases and merchandise is distinctly Middle Eastern, as is much of your lyrical subject matter... even the evolution from The Observers to the Red Dons involved an incorporation of traditionally Eastern musical scales. What's the intention there? I've personally just attributed much of that to Daniel's Middle Eastern heritage, but it's definitely prevalent throughout everything you do as a band.

Hajji: I'd say that we haven't encountered any negative reactions. In fact, I'd say there hasn't been any reaction at all. It seemed like we fired a shot in the dark. That's not to say there haven't been some interesting discussions after gigs. They range from people who are Middle Eastern by descent or have family there, who are excited to see punk touching on issues of the area or utilizing art, language, and historical references. Other people come and want to talk politics; they want to know our stance on some issue. Most though, are just curious and know next to nothing about the Middle East.

Dave: I'm surprised this approach hasn't rubbed anyone the wrong way, particularly living and playing in a country whose political climate made a pretty serious shift into anti-Middle Eastern territory less than a decade ago.

Doug: The only place we've seen a reaction to our aesthetic was in Germany, not the U.S. It was completely unexpected, but looking back I can see why it hit a nerve with some folks. It happened when *Escaping Amman* came out. The artwork uses Arabic and Hebrew text and has references to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Politics involving Israel can be a touchy subject for Germans, what with their history and all. Most punks around the world have leftist politics and align themselves with Palestinians over Israelis. German punks can't really side with Palestine because that would make them anti-Israel, and anti-Semitic. But, as Hajji

said, we didn't really encounter a negative reaction there either. Mostly, people were just curious as to which side we supported.

Will: Coming from an outsider's perspective thus, I think that it's really interesting to have themes that aren't just about Western politics and culture. It seems like very few bands really research what they're writing about. They seem to stick to the same few topics the older bands did that forged the path, so to speak, without putting their own slant on the subject matter or musicianship. We all live in and have traveled to a lot of different places across the globe, so it seems only fitting that we'd use those experiences to try to put together a new angle or perception in our lyrics and songwriting.

Doug: I agree with Will. Our personal experiences are definitely a focal point of the band. These experiences inform and change the songwriting, so that could explain the differences between the Red Dons and our past projects. As a guitar player, I've always been influenced by Eastern music, surf, and psychedelic stuff from the '60s. But before writing music with Hajji, I kinda limited my use of Eastern scales. Working together has encouraged me to explore those interests in a more obvious way.

Dave: Injecting elements and exoticism of an unknown "other" immediately adds this sort of confrontational mystery to a band—to me, much in the same way that the early avant-garde European "punk" bands did, Einstürzende Neubauten for example. I feel like Red Dons really harkens back to the multi-level, other-culture association those bands represented—an aural, visual, and lyrical window into a situation that, historically—at least within the genre—has been ignored or misrepresented.

Hajji: Early on in the formation of the band, Doug and I had been talking about the total lack of knowledge of the Middle East in the States, even though we were embroiled in a second war and had so many troops and associated government, NGO, and general civilian workers there. How could it be that we had hundreds of thousands of people going back and forth, their lives impacted and influenced—yet nobody knew anything



**Nothing
bonds two
people
together
like having
wiped their
asses with
their own
hands.**



about the place? I had just returned from studying in Jordan and wanted some kind of outlet for my experiences—especially to bring an Eastern slant to punk, which I felt was severely lacking or non-existent. So we set about writing music. It's not just about my experiences or politics or what have you, but a more total view. We were looking at art, music, literature, history. In other words, life. We are not a political band; we are trying to explore our existence and the struggle to live it. It just so happens that it involves politics—you can't ever get away from people manipulating your life. So the development of the band is intrinsically intertwined with our exploration of all things Middle Eastern.

Dave: Hajji, maybe you could lay out some specific instances during your time in the Middle East that became lyrical subjects for Red Dons?

Hajji: Well, "West Bank" is about a trip I took to Israel. To start with, the region was going through some difficult times: I had arrived in Jordan just ten days before September 11, 2001. Pile on top of that the war in Afghanistan and the second Intifada... I had a trip planned to visit Israel—as well as Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. This, of course, freaked out my host family and they didn't want me living with them anymore. Right before I was supposed to leave, I had to find a new place to live. I had to change all my tickets, including my bus ticket to the North. During the move, the bus I was scheduled to take, and still held a ticket for, was bombed. Everyone inside was killed. "West Bank" is written from the viewpoint of a pilgrim, the bomber, and myself all collapsed into one.

"Hajji Takes a Ride" is about getting caught in a riot in Amman. I was in a cab, crossing town on a Friday. Often, Friday sermons are usurped for the purpose of politics—sermons are typically tightly controlled in Jordan to keep a thumb on radical clerics and the conservative religious movements that crop up from time to time against the government. One such sermon was being given at a mosque near the road I was traveling down. Social unrest in the country was at a high because of Afghanistan and there were lots of anti-American demonstrations. The government had sent in riot police either to control the situation or to stop it. I'll never know. But, as what often happens, it was like gasoline on a fire, and in no time flat it was a running battle.

Eventually, the police were on one side and the protesters were on the other, with the police firing tear gas over the road and cars. Here I was, in the back of a cab with tear gas flying overhead and a crowd shouting, "Down with America" a few car lengths away. People had been violent with me before when they found out I was American, and in a situation like this anything could happen. If they found some poor white guy in the back of a random cab, it could very well have resulted in death. As I was sinking into my seat, trying to look inconspicuous, the driver turned around to look at me. His look

was one I'll never forget. It said, "You're not getting any help from me."

Dave: So you'd been attacked by people who realized you were an American living in Jordan?

Hajji: Yeah. I had also been the subject of several bomb threats. When you're one of the few Americans living in Amman, news spreads quickly. Everybody knows who you are and where you live. I got a message on the door of my apartment saying there was a bomb attached to it and that it would go off if I opened the door. I had grown quite desensitized to these threats, but this was the first time I was in control of the bomb's activation. I had a choice: to ignore the note and open the door, either proving or disproving the bomb's existence, or make a big deal out of it and run away. I ignored the note and opened the door, though I knew I could possibly be choosing death. That moment of psychological terror, of fear and trembling, is the kernel of the song "Land of Reason."

"Unheard Words" is about a disturbance at my school, the University of Jordan. There had been weekly demonstrations on campus, with parades, rallies, and occasional flag burnings. Police were not allowed to enter the grounds, so the students were safe to protest to their hearts' content. Things had been escalating and the pressure had come to a head. The main street in front of the school was lined with police vans as far as you could see. There were countless rows of riot police in military fatigues, wearing balaclavas and holding rifles with tear gas cylinders affixed to the end. The protest was going full bore and a lot of my friends were there. At some point—I don't know what sparked it—the police began firing tear gas at the students over the main gate. Now, if you've never been gassed before, all I have to say is that you will do *anything* to get away from the stuff. Coughing and blinded, I ran inside the nearby library. I went up a floor and lay down between the stacks. The windows were open so the tear gas kept wafting in. I could hear the disturbance going on below. When I could finally get up and look outside, all the people were gone. There was an abandoned ambulance. People's shoes, purses, personal effects were scattered about. The song is attempting to describe that moment stopped in time.

Dave: How does someone even carry on living a normal life, let alone studying at university after living through experiences like those?

Hajji: When I came back to Portland, I had a number of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder problems. For years, I had this reoccurring nightmare where I died. "Room 322" is basically about my life falling apart while I was back in the U.S. I had been working in the Middle East studies center at Portland State University. The office where I worked was in East Hall, room 322. Eventually I lost it, dropped out of school, and checked out of life. It's the theatre of my failure.

Doug: Hajji and I lived together at the time. Despite barely leaving his room, he seemed perfectly normal. Neither one of us realized the extent of his PTSD until years later, after everything had fallen apart.

Dave: Hajji, had you spent extended periods of time there prior to studying in Jordan, or was this your first experience living in the Middle East? Do you have any family still living there?

Hajji: No, I had not. I had visited Turkey before, but Jordan was my first long stay. I had some family living there in the past but it wasn't permanent. My connection to the region is from well in the past, but my father always had an interest in the region and it was a frequent topic and area of study in my house growing up.

Dave: Doug, you'd also mentioned something once about Hajji's and your grandfather being co-workers and the two of you having some other strange connections.

Doug: My grandfather owned the first truck stop in the Pacific Northwest. Hajji's granddad was a tire salesman and sold tires to my Grandpa. Besides that, we just have a lot of things in common that are atypical for two American kids. Both of our families moved around a lot when we were younger, and so as children we each spent a lot of time in Europe. We both went to school outside of Stuttgart—Hajji during junior high and I for part of college. In our early twenties, we each lived in third world countries—he in Jordan and I in Thailand. Nothing bonds two people together like having wiped their asses with their own hands. [Laughs] Mostly, we've just been close friends for a long time. We've lived together off and on over the years. He even lived with my parents for a while. It was like Henry Rollins living with Greg Ginn's folks. He's pretty much a part of the family now. We joke that our grandfathers made some pact with the devil to make this all happen.

Dave: At the risk of bringing up a touchy subject, what's the story with Red Dons' original drummer Romeo's (Derek Skokan) departure? Was that a product of you guys kinda being scattered across the globe or was that something entirely separate?

Doug: [Laughs] It was something entirely separate.

Hajji: At the time, we had the most normal of band arrangements. Practice space, band practice at regular times, local shows, a tour planned. I think that maybe it was the pressure of the normal situation that may have helped push him over the edge. [Laughs]

Doug: Yeah, we actually functioned like a proper band. We all lived in Portland, practiced several times a week. No, Romeo missed his girlfriend so he flew home in the middle of our first tour. They had been dating for a little over a year and the two weeks that we'd been on the road already was the longest they'd ever been apart. To them, spending another two weeks away from each other was unbearable, so he went home. The problem was that he never told us about his wonderfully romantic plan to leave us stranded on the other side of the country.

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We are not a political band; we are trying to explore our existence and the struggle to live it. You can't ever get away from people manipulating your life.

"Just Write, Romeo" is a true account of how it went down. Immediately after playing a set in Brooklyn, Derek put his sticks down, walked out to the van, grabbed his bags and hailed a cab to the airport. No one saw him leave, so we spent hours looking for him after the show. Then, I received a text message from him as his plane was taxiing on the runway. The gist of the text was that he had no hard feelings toward any of us or the band. In fact, he even encouraged us to continue on. He just couldn't risk losing his girlfriend over playing in the band.

Dave: It's safe to say that being on the road isn't for every personality type.

Doug: They were broken up a year later anyway. Derek's a good guy. It was just an unfortunate situation. That was his first tour and I don't think he really understood the ramifications of his actions. The funniest and most awkward part of the story is that Derek and I worked together, so we had to see each

other every week for years after everything went down. One last tidbit about the song "Just Write, Romeo," the reggae sample at the end of the song is a recording that Derek and I did together before starting the Red Dons. We wrote the song together and the lyrics are about being ashamed of your actions. It seemed appropriate to include. Derek's departure was serendipitous, however, because it ushered in Richie as our drummer and the band really jelled after that.

Dave: Yeah, Richie, how did you end up joining the fold?

Richie: When *Escaping Amman* came out in 2007, the lyrics, imagery, and music commanded my attention. Seeing this new project surface, coupled with my short-lived involvement with The Speds and an early incarnation of The Observers, I made it to the first Red Dons show I could. It was a tour kick off show; the bill was Red Dons, Clorox Girls, and Warcy. After the show I walked

up to Daniel, Doug, and Justin separately, and I spilled my guts about how I wished I had never quit working with Doug. I was fed up with what I was doing in other bands and Red Dons felt refreshing and new. So, I told them that if ever they needed someone to fill in on drums, I'd be there. I said my peace, but figured my words were five years "too little, too late" or that they had fallen on deaf ears.

Two weeks later, I get an unexpected email from Doug titled, "Urgent Message for Richie" with his phone number enclosed. I didn't believe it. I called him minutes after he had written the email. Their drummer had left the tour and they wanted to see if I could meet them in New York. I couldn't, but with the tour cut short and studio time scheduled, Doug hopped a flight back to Portland. The next ten days in a row he and I practiced Red Dons material all day and night. Justin and Hajji returned to Portland on the eleventh day and we went directly into

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the studio and recorded *Death to Idealism*. Those recordings are the first time I played with the band.

Dave: Okay, so now not only is Red Dons international in terms of its lyrical and thematic scope, but both core members and collaborators live in quite a few different locations, correct? How does that even work? What does that constrained availability bring to the table in terms of contribution?

Hajji: Yes, we live in quite a few places, indeed. Doug's in Chicago, Richie in Portland, Will in Hamburg, and I'm in London—not to mention all the other people involved in the band in some way. How does it work? No idea, but I suspect it has something to do with a similar view and goals, and a freedom to be a creative person in your own right. Each of us works very hard at his own part to make it creative and the best that it can be.

Will: As far as I can tell, it hasn't seemed to really affect much, other than we would all really like to play together in a studio once or twice a week. Of course, it would be more productive to have a regular band

situation—practice, local shows... although, I'd be frightened to see how much material we'd have if that were possible [laughs].

Hajji: I think that learning how to operate in this process is what took us a long time to do the second record. Part of it is throwing away your ego and part of it is perfecting your own art. Sometimes I feel like we lose some of the random fun and spontaneous music that happens when you spend a lot of time together, but when we *are* on tour it just makes that time so much more important and fun. On the other hand, it forces you to think about the overall project more and refine what you're doing. Now I think the band has finally achieved a personality and that helps people contribute to it whether or not we're all in the same room. Not to mention that Doug, Richie, and I have been working together for many, many years now.

Doug: That fact alone is a large part of why this works. Our history together provides a lot of stability in an otherwise unsteady arrangement.

Will: I think what Red Dons is best at is being able to make any sort of style our own. I have a different guitar style than Doug and I've brought riffs to the band I thought wouldn't fit. After a very short time, we've fashioned them to match the band's sound. I came into the group thinking I'd basically be just a live rhythm guitarist, and right away that proved to not be the case. In six short months I've been able to contribute riffs, arrangements, leads, and ideas. That's without ever really being in a studio with the rest of the band more than the three days we practiced before tour.

Doug: Being apart from one another actually gives us time to be influenced by a lot of different things, formulate different ideas, and edit those ideas down before presenting them to the band. When we finally get together, each person truly presents the best stuff they have to offer. The best part about all of it is when these different ideas come together. There are many unpredictable combinations that turn out to be really cool and form something greater than the sum of its parts.





RATI



RICHIE TUFFINI

INTERVIEW BY FAT RICH WARWICK AND TODD TAYLOR

PHOTOS BY JOANN DONNELLY AND RICHIE TUFFINI

LAYOUT BY KEITH ROSSON

N.

S.

There was a time in the '90s when DIY punk seemed a utopia in small, isolated places along the East Coast. The two that always stood out to me were the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania and Long Island in New York. Unlike the grumpy confines of Philadelphia, New York City, and the rest of the Northeast corridor, these two places embraced whatever their scene was outputting with genuine support and encouragement. A new band of old dudes (and dudettes) from one of these scenes (Long Island) seems destined to remind anyone willing to listen that those days aren't necessarily gone; they just need a little kindling to reignite the fire of DIY spirit. With the release of their debut LP *For Victory*, everything about this band yells honesty, sincerity, and doing what they do for all the right reasons.

Social Dee - drums/vocals

Tia - bass/vocals

Brian: guitar/vocals

Wells: guitar/vocals

Rich: Wells and Brian, you guys are in your mid-thirties—which, in punk years, is like being great-granddads. Why did you decide to start a band now? When was the last time you guys were in a band?

Wells: It was 1998 when we were in a band together. That was the last time I was in a real band. But, Brian, you were playing in Ethnic.

Brian: I was playing in Ethnic probably five years ago. Me and Wells were in Striped Bastards which ended in 1998. In 2003, I moved back to Long Island from the city and played drums in the second incarnation of Lamagna. I don't think we were looking to do a band again, so much as just to play music. Wells and I were just talking about how it would be fun to get together and do music. The band came out of that.

Rich: You started 86'd Records again after not doing your old label Traffic Violation for so many years. Is it weird putting out records again? It's almost like nineteen-year-old Wells has been reborn a little bit.

Wells: I like doing it. And I've felt nostalgic about it. I think nostalgia is useful in that you remember all the great things about the old days, but maybe you can change the things that you didn't like about it. Now, playing in a band and starting a label again, I'm looking to maximize what I did enjoy about it. But I'm making sure that the stuff that drove me away last time isn't as bad. But, really, it's just a natural thing. I did Traffic Violation forever and then I got tired of it and I stopped doing it. Now I'm doing this other stuff, back into it.

Rich: How about you, Social Dee? Wells, Brian, and Tia have all been involved in the punk scene, and you're coming from the outside a bit. Is it weird that you're in a band with a bunch of people doing this kind of stuff for ten to fifteen-plus years?

Social Dee: I have nothing to compare it to. This is my first band. I guess it couldn't be a better group of people for me. I feel most comfortable with these people.

Tia: Yay!

Rich: Dee, why do you wear so much denim?

Social Dee: I'm trying to get over my fear of denim.



JOANN DONNELLY



JOANN DONNELLY

I THINK THE MISTAKE THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE MAKE AS THEY GET OLDER IS THEY THINK “BACK WHEN” WAS GENUINE AND “BACK WHEN” ISN’T AROUND ANY MORE. THE TRUTH IS YOU JUST GOT OLD AND YOU GOT SHITTY.

Rich: You’re getting rid of your fear of all denim by wearing all denim?

Wells: Exposure therapy. She couldn’t even be in a room with a pair of blue jeans a few years ago.

Todd: What is one story that defines a big part of your personality? Something monumental. It can be about anything, really.

Social Dee: I was walking down the street one day and I saw a mother holding the hands of her two kids walking on either side of her. They were walking opposite me and the mother walked right into the crosswalk without stopping. The kids both stopped short at the curb as the mother kind of got yanked back. She yelled, “C’mon! What are you doing?!” The two children responded, “But... but... a car was coming.” The mother yells back, “But they have a stop sign! They have to stop!” The kids reply, “But what if they don’t?” I felt like going up to the mother and punching her in the face. I hope those kids don’t stop questioning what comes out of their mother’s mouth. I wonder what she’s like with them when they’re not in public. It’s scary.

Tia: I grew up in a family full of musicians. My mom, dad and brother all played guitar and sang. The family needed a bass player so they stuck me, tiny little Tia, with the electric bass and that’s basically how I got started playing. My family was so supportive about music, so for me playing in punk bands wasn’t a way of rebelling. It was more a form of expression that I have always been proud of, and it is mainly because I had a family that supported it. It didn’t matter to them whether I played in bands with smelly kids with tattoos and piercings. As long as we were happy and good people, they thought it was incredible.

We would play loud, late at night, and usually pretty horrible music that they never put down. My dad would even grab his slide guitar and come down and jam with us. My friends loved it! I remember my parents even attended an On The Might Of Princes show when I was away in college and I was so jealous they got to go and hang out with my friends and I didn’t. It wasn’t always easy being the only girl in a

room full of guy musicians, but they encouraged me to do my best and made me believe that I was just as good if not better than the boys. I really owe them a lot for helping make me such a confident bassist.

Brian: I never thought much about dying. I never thought much about living either. I took my days for granted, and always thought I’d have another shot at another day. On September 11, 2001 I woke up, got dressed, and took the subway to my job as a high school math teacher at a school one block from the World Trade Center. As I was teaching first period pre-calculus, the first plane crashed into the Trade Center. We watched the building burn from my classroom window until the second plane hit. My school was evacuated to Battery Park in lower Manhattan. Just as we got there, the first tower collapsed. We were quickly engulfed by a cloud of dust and ash. It was impossible to see anything. You could only hear. What you could hear was made up of horrific screams and fighter jets—unknown to be American at the time—flying overhead. Someone started screaming, “They’re gonna bomb us.” I believed them. I prepared to die. I prepared myself to feel an explosion tear my body apart. The death I anticipated never came. I’m still working on convincing myself that I’m as alive as I always was. What I learned from that day is that you never know what day will be your last.

Rich: Did everyone contribute lyrics and music on *For Victory*?

Brian: Everyone contributed on the music, but mostly me and Wells would come with lyrics for songs we had written on guitar, then we’d all put it together. I think that the record itself is probably the thing that I’m the most proud of working on in a band that I’ve done. I think Wells feels the same.

Wells: Yeah.

Brian: And I’m real psyched on it lyrically. I’ve always played as a drummer in bands, so this was the first time I’ve been able to write the music and words to songs. So this is a kind of cool experience to me.

Wells: Yeah, It’s kind of funny that we’re like front men. That was the



**YOU CAN'T SQUASH A KID
WHO'S TRYING TO MAKE
MUSIC, JUST BECAUSE
THEIR BAND IS KIND OF
SHITTY. ALL OF OUR BANDS
WHEN WE FIRST STARTED
WERE KIND OF SHITTY.**

gag starting the band: to be front men. But it's neat making up songs the way you want them to sound. It's fucking awesome.

Rich: What are the lyrics about?

Wells: I think most of the record is about dying.

Brian: Most of the record is pretty dark with the lyrics.

Rich: Do you think it's weird to have dark lyrics with music that isn't so dark and brooding?

Brian: I don't know. Are the sounds all very happy?

Wells: I guess there's juxtaposition there a little bit. But, fuck, I feel like the reason I'm most proud of it is that it's what I want to see and hear from a band.

Todd: What's the importance of the FDR sound bite on the record? Why FDR and why that one?

Social Dee: Eleanor Roosevelt is hot?

Wells: That's part of FDR's "Four Freedoms" speech. On one level, it's this awesome, rousing call for justice and peace, outlining a vision of a world without war and poverty with freedom of speech and religion for all. He's talking about reducing armaments to a level that would prevent any nation from being able to wage war. And he's talking about it being a concrete possibility in that generation. The reality of the entire speech, however, was that it was a plea to Congress and the reluctant American people to support massive spending on armaments to send to Europe before any direct U.S. involvement in WWII. It was the same kind of stuff about waging war to build peace that we hear today. To me, the idea that WWII was a "good war" is false. War in every case is an enemy to human freedom and justice.

Rich: Social Dee and Tia, how do you feel about the record?

Tia: I didn't play on these songs that just came out. I joined after the recording, but I love them. I think they're great. I joined pretty much because I thought it'd be fun and I really liked the music and the people in the band. So, I like the music a lot. I think it's awesome.

Rich: The packaging on the record to me doesn't look like how the record sounds. The packaging looks more like an Ebullition release, but that's not necessarily how it sounds.

Brian: Wells did all the layout on the record. I kind of know what Wells' layouts started as and what it has developed into. I know he was always influenced by Born Against layouts and the Ebullition stuff. I think he's always liked the cardboard stock and the grainy artwork and I think that's always been the way he's always done the flyers and stuff like that too. So, to me, it totally fits how the layout looks.

Wells: I think what I liked about the Born Against records and Ebullition releases and other stuff like that was the care that was taken with them. It seemed to me that the experience of being in a band

was important enough to warrant putting your time and care into the artwork that came along with it. This band and this record and the music mean enough to me to really spend a lot of time on the artwork. Pretty much the record was laid out with the tools that were available in the '90s—which is when a lot of the records that we love came out—so it kind of has the look of a record from the '90s.

Rich: So what about ambitions? I don't see you guys being on a U.S. tour or whatever. But you guys are playing shows so it's not a project band.

Wells: It's a local band, and that's what we grew up with. Long Island is very insulated like that. We have local bands.

Tia: What I liked a lot about this band was that it was more locally focused. Rations being a Long Island band in the scene we love and hanging out and the emphasis not on getting big and touring. It was more about, "Let's have fun and play local basement shows with our friends." That was really appealing to me.

Rich: So if you guys ended up being one of those local bands that people in other parts of the country think suck and didn't get, that'd be okay? I remember bands like Vision Of Disorder from Long Island, and I'd think, "How does anyone like this?" and three thousand kids would go see them in Long Island.

All: [Laughs]

Brian: Where are you from, Rich? Philly? I'm picking up on the "in Long Island" thing. That's an outsider's dialect. It's "on Long Island." We speak differently here. We're on Long Island, not in it. People don't say that unless they're outsiders.

Rich: So would you give a shit if people didn't like you off Long Island?

Brian: That wouldn't bum me out at all. My favorite bands from way back, I didn't think I'd ever see those bands. I always thought the records that I had of those bands from far away were so much more valuable to me 'cause I never thought I'd get to see them.

Wells: When Brian and I used to do the label, I always liked the idea of trading with small labels from far away. You know, labels like Slow To Burn from Victoria, BC, or a lot of the German labels we traded with, or Farmhouse in San Jose, CA. You never got the sense that you'd see Goat Boy or M-Blanket or Krupted Peasant Farmerz, so the records became that much more important. That's why this record that's coming out is so important to us. We're fucking proud of this record and the work we put into making the songs up, and the packaging of the record, and the whole thing. It's neat to know that people are going to see and hear this in other communities. Whether they like it, is up to them I guess.

Rich: What type of thing would you do with Rations, now that you're a little bit older, that you wouldn't have considered when you were younger?

Wells: I think when we were in bands earlier, I thought a lot about what other people thought about it, whereas with this band, I don't think about it as much. I think about wanting my songs to be as good as they can be. Not because of people, but because I want to see how good of a song I can make up.

Brian: I agree with that. I also think the way we interact as a band. We don't force anyone to do anything like practice a certain amount or play tons of shows. In bands that we were in when we were younger, if you couldn't make practice, you'd be made to feel guilty and stuff like that. Here, we realize that everyone is doing his or her own thing.

Wells: Rations is where everyone can come together whenever and wherever they can. You come together where you can agree and where we don't, Rations just doesn't go there.

Brian: It's cool. It keeps it fun to play. It's not a task. It's just kind of playing for playing.

Rich: So, why the name Rations?

Brian: It's better than the Shit Stainz

All: [Laughs]

Wells: That was the name of the band Me, Brian, and Deirdre had before Rations. Arwen Curry who used to be a coordinator at *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll* has a zine called *Ration*. I always liked that name. I actually asked her before, or maybe I didn't. Maybe I told her after. But, anyway, I liked it so I introduced it to the band.

Social Dee: Rations SS!

Wells: Yeah, I wanted to call it that. SS for Shit Stainz.

Brian: We didn't go with that 'cause the Nazi implications.

Wells: I have a question. I'd like to know why Tia joined the band.

All: [Laughs]



JOANN DONNELLY

Rich: She already answered that.

Wells: Yeah, but why does she still want to be in the band?

All: [Laughs]

Wells: When I explain to regular people in my life—like outside of punk—that the record just came out, and they're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. You're in that band, right?" And I'm like, "Yeah, our bass player has toured the world playing music (formerly with Bridge And Tunnel and currently with Fellow Project). She's a real musician." That's my defense to normal people.

Social Dee: Before they even say anything?

Wells: Yeah, I'm super defensive and weird.

Rich: That brings up a point about "normal people." You have to admit you almost have two lives. When you were younger, you were one-hundred percent punk. Punk all the time. At a certain point you identified solely as a punk kid and that was it. Now you're an adult.

Tia: I think even though we're adults, punk has influenced our adult lives. Personally with me, a lot of the ideals that are punk I've tried to incorporate into my business ideals. I feel like it has translated and I'm sure it has with you guys, too. Punk—that mentality—has translated into more adult things and I think it's just the way I've grown and tried to not sell out... trying to stay punk while having an adult life.

Todd: What is your day-to-day job? What is something from that job that you've brought into The Rations?

Tia: I own my own company called Vaya Bags that makes handmade bike messenger bags and accessories out of recycled sailboat awnings and recycled bicycle tubes. We just opened up a store in Queens, NY where me and my friends make all of the bags as well as sell out of our storefront. It is pretty awesome being my own boss, especially because I get to hire my friends to help me out. I have a couple of good friends who work for me who are also into punk, so we pretty much listen to music all day. Work is fun instead of being a chore. Another perk to being my own boss is that I can take off work to go on tour, which is a rare thing to find in this nine-to-five world. I definitely try to incorporate my punk ethics into my business. For us, Vaya Bags isn't just about making money. It is about building a product that we are proud of while keeping it affordable and building relationships with our customers and community.

Social Dee: I study physics and mathematics at the local university here in Stony Brook. So, everyday I'm either building or destroying circuits, writing really long lab reports, or learning to swim in Intermediate Swim 102.

Todd: Do you have to "de-code" what you're doing in a punk band to your classmates?

Social Dee: I don't think anyone from school knows that I play in a band. Anytime I've told someone that I play the drums, they say something like, "Really? No way! Play me a beat!" This makes me uncomfortable, so now I don't really mention it. I love school but it's very easy to get caught up and obsessed. Lots of staying home alone with my books and many pots of coffee can make anyone feel a bit weird after awhile... and I'm shy to begin with, so I've been trying to put myself in situations that get me out of the box a little. I think it's important to try to create some balance, like Kung-Fu. One day, I hope to be a real person.

Wells: I grappled with this while having business success with running Icon (a CD manufacturer that Wells used to own and Rich used to work at), doing it well, and sort of learning that I was good at business-world stuff. But a lot of the things that I felt strongly about when I was younger and full-on into punk informed my business decisions later. There was a morality in the business decisions: things that I wouldn't do and things that I would try to do. That stuff was definitely informed by punk. The values that I learned in punk as a kid were absolutely applied to that. And what really shocked me the most was, first, how gross the business world really is. And second, how punk ideals—like being honest and cool to people—were so effective in the business world. I think being honest and cool to people in the business world reaped more benefits than being greedy and suspicious. But I guess we dealt with a lot of punk companies, too.

Tia: There is always this idea that to be good in business you have to fuck people over and basically be dishonest. That's always that thing in business that I hated.

Rich: Always be number one.

Tia: Like step on people to be on top. I've been determined to make a business that was the complete opposite, a business that thinks about the consumers and the community, instead of against people.



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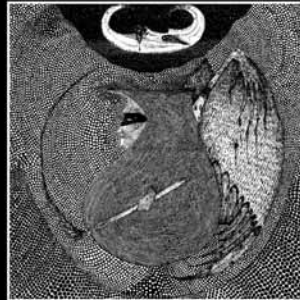
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Wells: And that was all shit we learned in punk. Maybe not all... but a lot.

Tia: That it's not just about money, it's about more. It's about creating something, which is what we're doing with music. It's not for money. To be artistic, or whatever you want to call it.

Brian: As for a regular life versus a punk life: I don't really see myself having a punk life. I see myself playing in a band with my friends. Having said that, I don't think I have ever felt comfortable sharing my music or my bands' shows with people who didn't also share a personal interest in punk. I think they wouldn't understand and think I was stupid for doing it. I felt that way when I was seventeen and I feel that way now.

Wells: I've been trying to integrate the two. Like when we do the release show, I want to invite all the people I hang out with at the local Starbucks, people I know from business, family friends, everyone. I think that's going to be a neat moment for me integrating a lot of the people from those different worlds.

Rich: What about independent music in general? What are your thoughts? Do you think it's gross? Like when we [to Wells] worked doing CD manufacturing, we got to see the worst of the worst: The band manager who thinks he's got the next hot band, everyone thinking they were bigger than they were, press sheets, major label distribution, Soundscans, and stuff like that.

Wells: I think there's always boring bullshit corporate stuff. There have always been insincere bands and managers and shit like that and then there have always been scenes of friends that are doing bands and playing in each other's basements. I think the mistake that a lot of people make as they get older is they think "back when" was genuine and "back when" isn't around any more. That's the justification for working some shitty "indie" corporate music job. The truth is you just got old and you got shitty, that's why. The cool basement shows are still there, it's just that you're not participating in them.

Todd: Wells, why did you stop Icon Omnimedia?

Wells: I just had a pretty strong sense that I didn't want to do it anymore. I had built the company up over four or so years and it was still growing and successful, but I was really burnt out on it. I didn't enjoy being the boss of people, particularly. So, I looked into if there were any companies around that wanted to buy it. The process of finding a buyer and selling the company was actually pretty neat. I wound up selling in November of 2008.

Todd: What are you doing now and what was the transition like?

Wells: I was able to fuck off and not work for exactly twenty-three months before I started a new job recently with a CD and vinyl manufacturer in New York City called A to Z Media. The time off was pretty transformative. I got into stuff like nutrition and body building. I got more involved with punk than I had been in years, dedicating more time to jamming, going to shows, and writing and practicing with Rations. I also started the new label to put Rations and some other records out. I started a small company with Lubrano from Iron Chic, called Righteous Indignation that does layouts and illustrations for bands. I smoked a bunch of rope. I even hooked up with the local Quakers around here and have been learning about what they're up to... their approaches to non-hierarchical organization, consensus decision making, war-tax resistance, and a bunch more.

Brian: This is a totally old guy thing to say, but I think that the internet and things like MySpace have taken something from the sincerity of the search for music.

Wells: I'd agree with that.

Rich: It's so easy now to start a band or even to put out a record. There are so many bands these days that maybe ten years ago might have just recorded a demo and that's it, but now they have records out and are selling T-shirts and all this stuff.

Tia: But then who's to decide? You can't squash a kid who's trying to make music, just because their band is kind of shitty. All of our bands when we first started were kind of shitty.

Wells: Yeah, that's the thing, but underground music just used

JOANN DONNELLY

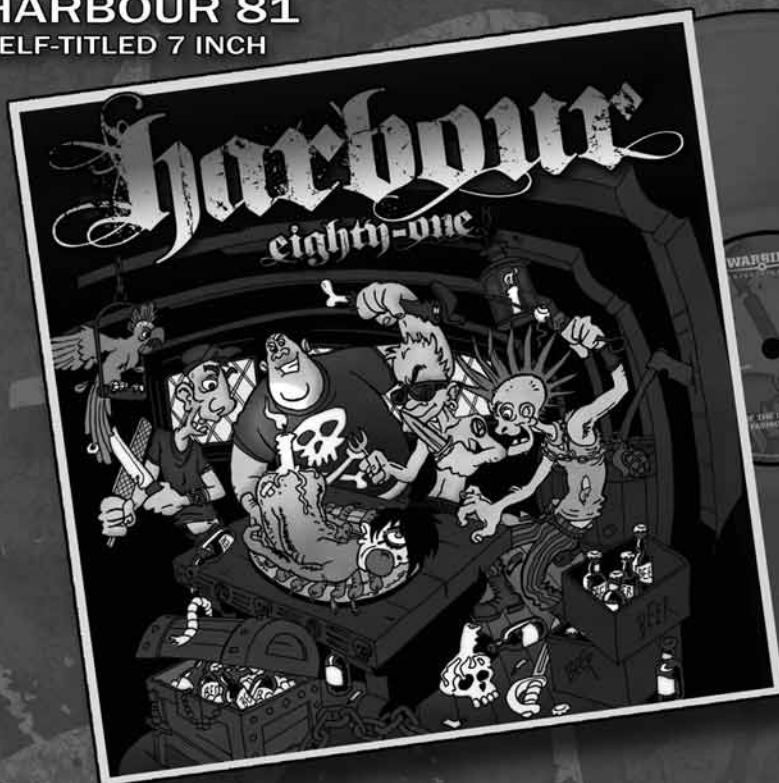


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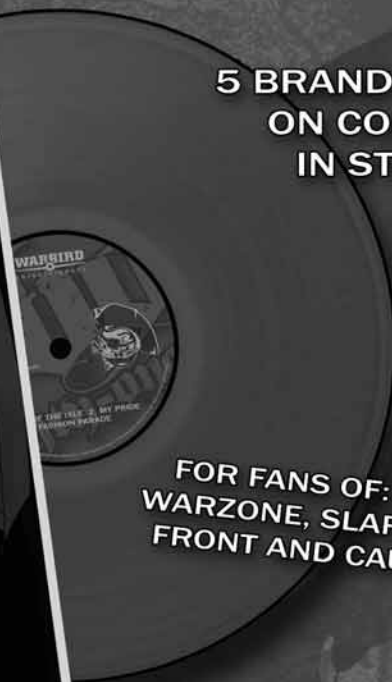
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to be harder to get. Like today, I walked past Ward Melville, the high school where Brian went. There was a dude that straight-up looked like an extra from a movie about punk in 1983. He had the right band patches, the right jeans, the right leather. It's really very easy now to research a narrow genre of music and then decide that's what you're going to identify as and be. It wasn't like that when we were getting into punk and playing in bands in 1993-1994.

Brian: Yeah, and not hearing about bands until there was like a touring band with a distro box.

Wells: Yeah, that's how we found out about Krupted Peasant Farmerz.

Brian: Or having to mail away to a label and having to wait a long time to get records you weren't even sure you'd like or not.

Wells: It was different then. You'd get the new catalog with the record you ordered, and that would give you the news on the next record that was coming out.

Tia: I used to love those catalogs.

Wells: Oh dude, they were so gnarly. The old Farmhouse Records catalog or Blacklist Mailorder. Fuck!

Rich: What about digital music? Digital only and that stuff.

Tia: Half of me doesn't like it 'cause I like to see something in my hands, but being in a band, it's way easier to get your music out that way. I know a lot of people who have websites that have free songs for download and that's a really cool and awesome way for people to find music, get free music, and learn about bands they wouldn't know otherwise. It's pretty cool. But you lose the art, the lyric sheet.

Rich: Do you think the whole thing makes music more disposable?

Wells: It's hard to say because I grew up with physical media, so that's what I'm used to. That's what I want. But when people that are ten years old now are buying music when they're eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old, I have no idea what it's going to look like. I don't want to criticize the way they interact with music as opposed to the

behind it is what made something "indie." But it's turned into a word to describe a genre and a style of music. I think the same thing is happening to the word "DIY." Now, bands that sound a certain way are called DIY bands. It's not necessarily the ethic and the values and the ethos that gets that description.

Tia: I agree.

Wells: Is it weird to hire a "DIY public relations guy?" The term "public relations," like how you relate to the public. Is that something that's being outsourced? You outsource how you relate to people listening to your music? That seems weird to me, but I guess we can't get a PR guy now. I guess that's out, now that it's in print. [Laughs]

Todd: What's the most egregious example of "punk lifestyle" commodity you've come across?

Wells: Probably the grossest example of that kind of stuff I've come across was very recently with that Red Bull Noise Complaint contest in New Jersey. It was essentially a battle of the bands judged by that band Thursday and the winners got a spot on a "real life New Brunswick, NJ basement show." It was Red Bull attempting to link its brand to underground DIY punk basement shows. Totally shitty. What ruled about it was that it backfired. Punks started posting on their page how shitty it was and how the attention would actually lead to more basement shows getting shut down by the cops. Aaron from Attica! Attica! and some of his pals put together this emergency compilation called *Please Don't Hang Out in Front of the House* with bands paying tribute to real basement and house shows. That's online at dontstandinfrontofthehouse.tumblr.com. The negative attention prompted Red Bull to switch it to a bar venue. I'm sure that the fucked marketing people who came up with it were kids with some kind of historical connection to punk, so that sucks.

Todd: So, on the converse, what are some bands and labels that you admire that are currently "doing it right?"

Wells: I think Mike from Dead Broke Records and all his

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT HOT TOPIC WOULD BE WHERE A LOT OF YOUNGER KIDS AND KIDS GETTING INTO PUNK BUY THEIR MUSIC—AT THEIR GENERATION'S VERSION OF SPENCER GIFTS.

way I interact with music. The digital-only stuff doesn't appeal to me, though.

Tia: I really like these days when bands put out records with a download code. You have the record and you have the digital version that's easier for the car, and more portable locations.

Rich: Who would have thought Hot Topic would be where a lot of younger kids and kids getting into punk buy their music—at their generation's version of Spencer Gifts at the mall.

Wells: We heard this at Icon, too. I've heard dudes at punk and hardcore labels say that they were moving from being a record label to more of a "lifestyle company." These are the kind of indie labels that DIY bands sign to.

Tia: What does "lifestyle company" mean?

Wells: They sell T-shirts. They sell music. They appeal to kids that want a certain image, so they can sell them the whole package: clothes, music, ringtones, and everything else.

Rich: So Rations is a lifestyle brand. [Laughs]

Tia: A lot of DIY punk bands I know also have PR reps, which is really interesting to me these days. It's kind of like a common thing. A lot of friends of mine are punk PR reps and it's almost contradictory. People that I respect and I really like are PR people. For DIY punk bands? It's really interesting.

Rich: Yeah, there's a whole industry behind punk. You know, you could do all these things yourself, but you can also have them done. How do you guys feel about that?

Wells: I don't know. The word "indie" used to mean something about how the music was made and the business and the ethics and values

roommates are killing it around here. They throw great shows at their house with tons of touring bands, and the label is awesome and always supports local music. The local university that Dee goes to has a pretty great non-commercial radio station, WUSB, that represents and serves our local community. I think as a band and as individuals, Rations supports local stuff like that, as well as DIY and punk stuff from beyond our local community. We actually were able to get a track together for that *Please Don't Hang Out in Front of the House* compilation—which was very important to me to be a part of. That should be out for free download on the internet by the end of 2010.

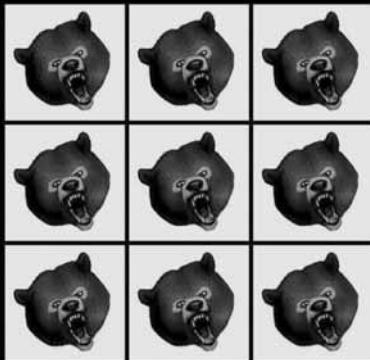
Tia: I agree with Wells that Dead Broke is definitely doing things right! They are such amazing people who have their priorities straight as far as maintaining a record label and supporting their scene. Another great Long Island Label is Rok Lok Records. It has been around for ten plus years and Mike really puts his heart into it. Kiss Of Death Records is also a great label because Bryon is willing to put out records and give bands a chance who may not draw a huge crowd, but who are just good bands. I like that he is willing to risk not making a profit to support an amazing lesser known band. No Idea is a larger, but still smaller label that continues to consistently keep their integrity. Var and Jen run an amazing operation that does so much for distributing punk bands and supporting bands on their label.

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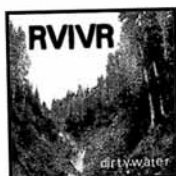


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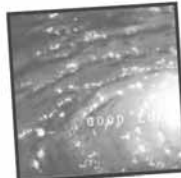
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rock that reminds me of a rawer Stitches. Despite being from Sonoma, I hear a big Orange County influence in their sound. It's tuneful, catchy, fast, and clean. "Open Your Eyes" is the faster of the two, and the one I listen to the most. "Angel on the Nine" is a bit more poppier, and, in a way, it holds the song back. Not a bad song, but when paired with what's on the B side, it doesn't have as much heat. —M.Avrq (Modern Action)

BRAIN CAR: *Rock & Roll Bologna: 7" EP*
Snotty punk ranting and railing against suburbia, Baghdad, spiders, and conforming to rules. They've got a definite '80s feel to 'em, and they can generate some interesting tuneage to match the obnoxiousness quite nicely. Good stuff. —Jimmy Alvarado (Reel Time)

CADDY: *Electric Hero: CD*
This sounds like something I would've stumbled upon in high school. It's general pop punk that's pretty slick. The art and layout of the whole thing is pretty nice. It reminds me of something that would be on Kung Fu Records back in the late '90s or early '00s, like just-pre-majors Ataris. Or for that matter, at times they remind me of Bracket. While some songs do run a little long, though there are a few moments where they break out the glockenspiel or synth that aren't too bad. —Joe Evans III (Diner Junkie)

CATBURGLARS, THE: *Self-titled: CD*
Full-length of clever-guy, sorry-I-like-acting-stupid, hardcore punk. Every

punk band is influenced by Black Flag. It's something that doesn't even need to be stated anymore. But not every punk band is influenced by "TV Party." Whether The Catburglars are covering "Cherrybomb," singing about John Goodman, or just showing their untainted love for The Ramones, Black Flag, or M.O.T.O., they do it with a sense of humor and a highly contagious and sincere air of nonchalant stupidity. —Daryl (Criminal IQ)

CHAINSAW TO THE FACE: *Self-titled: 7"*
Nineteen songs on a 7"? What da? Easy listening is definitely not going to happen here. A blur of start and stops that makes it hard to figure out the song separations if you don't pay attention. Ugliness played at slow speeds and then pushed to their max abilities in speed. Music that is played so aggressively that I imagine the guitar and bass player's fingers have calluses that are super thick but still bleed from playing a set. Their drummer, caffeinated to the point of heart failure, unleashes beats at a breakneck pace. I imagine a vocalist who can no longer speak due to the harsh torment his vocal chords receive from the all the guttural yelling. If you want happy, get Abba's *Greatest Hits*. Looking for something downright ugly and brutal? This is a good place as any. —Donofthedeat (Cowabunga)

CHESTY MALONE AND THE SLICE 'EM UPS / REASON TO FIGHT: *Split: 7"*
Chesty: Remember that drummer who was always naked in the *Hated*

video? The one who believed that he had a cosmic connection with the Lunachicks? Well, that's pretty much how I feel about Chesty—except that I'm not always nude. I also neither play drums nor think that I have a cosmic connection with anyone. Actually, Chesty just kinda reminds me of the Lunachicks. Reason: It's oi-influenced hardcore, which is far from my thing. Given the type of music, it's unsurprising that there's a song for workers on here. What can I say? The workingman gets the shaft again. —Vincent (United Riot, unitedriotrecords.com)

CITY OF SHIPS: *Three Mile Bridge: 7"*
Having heard a bit about City Of Ships prior to receiving this record, I figured I was in for some pretty standard Isis-inspired melodic dirges, and, brother, that's a world that I've had about my fill of in the past few years. Yet City Of Ships are certainly a pleasant surprise. I'm not going to venture as far as to say that they wouldn't fit right alongside the scores of Neurlis bitters currently spewing forth from *everywhere*, but City Of Ships kick up the tempo and melody enough to keep it infinitely more interesting than their legions of "peers." If you took *Oceanic*-era Isis or *ASTNS*-era Neurosis and injected some Young Livers-esque guitar work (note that this record was tracked by Ryan Williams, who has also worked with YLs), maybe a dash of These Arms Are Snakes/Botch quirkiness, you'd be on the right track. Pretty killer stuff. Nice job, fellas. —Dave Williams (Sound Study)

COBALT CRANES: *Self-titled: 7" EP*
Female but sometimes male vocals with a chunky, punkish rhythm guitar in my left ear, a fuzzy lead guitar doing Nuggetsy things in my right ear, a pleasantly farty bass in the middle of my head, and an oft-cymbal-less ((but occasionally tambourine-ful)) drumbeat making me feel that i, or someone, should be shimmying a bit to "Freak Out," although they probably ended the thing a minute too early for my rump's tastes. And, now that the taste of my rump has somehow come into play, i think i'll move on, lest i start trying to draw inane parallels between "Take You" and the fourth Psychedelic Furs album. **BEST SONG:** "Freak Out." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Freak Out." Apparently Frank Zappa knew what he was doing, which is surprising. **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** French people make their numerals weirdly. —Rev. Nørb (Frantic City)

COKE BUST: *Lines in the Sand: CD*
The vinyl version of this record was released a while ago, but Six Weeks just released the CD with fifteen bonus tracks (all previously released, though on more obscure releases). Coke Bust aren't opening any new doors in fast hardcore, but these songs are definitely full-on thrash core and full of the vim and vigor you should expect out of the genre. Old Vitamin X comes to mind, and I Object before they got boring. Sure, it all sounds like Minor Threat, but that's not a bad thing, is it? The


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older tracks are definitely worth having and are a worthwhile addition to the disc. The packaging is great, as the CD booklet is thick with lyrics, photos, and show flyers. If you're going to buy a CD version of something previously released on vinyl, you'd want it to look like this. —Ian Wise (Six Weeks)

CONCENTRATION SUMMER CAMPS: *Amour et Sourires: 12" EP*

Significantly more tuneful and listenable than one'd imagine a band that leads off with a ditty called "Discharge Were Right" would be, these Spaniards sound like they've cribbed more from old Dead Kennedys records ((hold the Jello™)) than Discharge, with just enough tell-tale Rock Ballast that i can tell they're from the same country as the Pleasure Fuckers. If you are on a scavenger hunt for a punk record by a Spanish band with English lyrics and a French album title, i'd imagine you could probably do worse than this, although the album-ending "Coffee & Coke" shouldn't drag on that long if it's not gonna have any saxophones. *Arriba arriba abajo izquierda derecha izquierda derecha A B seleccione estrella!* BEST SONG: "Rip Me" BEST SONG TITLE: Amazingly, "Discharge Were Right." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Record spine reads bottom-to-top, as is the Spanish custom. Once, i was doing a record cover layout for a Parasites album on a Spanish label, and i thought i would be a dick and put "IN AMERICA, RECORD COVER

SPINES GO THIS WAY. PLEASE MAKE A NOTE OF IT" running top-to-bottom on the spine. After i sent in my design, my text was spun 180 degrees, leaving the snarky and now-completely-inaccurate phrase running bottom-to-top. Joke's on me! —Rev. Nørb (Trabuc)

COWORKERS / INERDS: *Split: 7"*

Good split. Two demented bands that complement each other without sounding similar. Coworkers play dynamic and chaotic hardcore with the occasional blastbeat. This would fit in well at a mid-'90s basement show, but the vocals, which are snarled as opposed to screamed, make the band stand out. Inerds blow through some crust with dustbuster/ nails-on-chalkboard vocals. The raw recording adds to the power. Now, here's the question: Is the band name a crack on Mac geeks (iPod, iNerd...) or a Skynyrd-esque misspelling of "innards?" Either way, score. Awesome hand drawn cover art, to boot. —CT Terry (Feral Kid/Foot)

CRUSADES, THE: *Self-titled: 7" EP*

What the Statues are to Canadian office work, the Crusades are to Satan. To the five people that that makes sense to, you're welcome. Perhaps it's the Canadian tendency not to boast, but it took several listens for their dark arts to sink in. On the black, glossy cockroachy surface, they may initially sound like a second-run, too-proficient Swedish late '90s skaterock band, but you'd be mistaken. At an undisclosed

point in time, the thousand hooks fall from the ceiling in some sort of hellishly devised scenario and their trap's been sprung. You've just been ripped apart, but in a melodic punk rock way that uses that CockSparrer "Runnin' Riot" siren sound effect in one track that dissolves into the sound of crackling embers of a slow-burning fire. Hail the Crusades. —Todd (Scared To Death, myspace.com/scareddeath)

CRUSHED BUTLER: *Self-titled: 7"*

More '70s cocker rocker than I usually go for, but it's pretty, err, rocking. Retro release from Windian, originally recorded in 1970. Fans of T. Rex and leather and jeans should apply; fits in with fuzz and garage fans, too. Solid power sound can fuck up your speakers for a good party time. I'm a fan of Windian (Personal and the Pizzas, M.O.T.O., Dan Sartain, etc.). This just hit me different than those bands—which ain't a bad thing. —Speedway Randy (Windian)

CULO: *Military Trend: EP*

Un-gawd-damn-believably awesome! Pure fuggin' godhead hardcore punk rock! No metal, no pop, just straight-up hardcore punk. Four anthems of checking out of society and not giving a fuck who cares. This stuff sounds legit and not some part time pose. Fast, pissed, and catchier than hell. "Shootin' Glue" will burrow its way into your mind, and the title track is the sonic bull in a china shop. Instruments are beat to hell. I imagine a couple nodes

are going to develop on the singer's vocal chords, but what a great record. Looking forward to their split with Raw Nerve. —M.Avg (Deranged)

CUM STAIN: *Self-titled: Tape*

Lo-fi garage punk with its mind in the gutter outside some high school. The mood is obviously light and the attitude is more of a laugh than a snarl. If you were to take this serious and get upset, then you need some fucking help. Songs about dicks, sex, and being a dirty loser. Who can't relate to any or all of that? There are some good songs on here like "Smoker," "I WANT IT NOW!," "Jack Shack," which come on with some speed and a nice low end. Then there are some throwaway songs like "Cum Stain"; "Just another Kid" is a little too precious. Some good, some bad. —M.Avg (Burger)

DAG NASTY: *Dag with Shawn: CD*

Though I was well aware of 'em when they first started making the rounds, and have heard them innumerable times over the past twenty-five years, I gotta admit I've never picked up anything Dag Nasty. My initial reluctance was based on the fact that at the time I wasn't all that hip on much of the stuff their local contemporaries—Rites Of Spring, Embrace, Gray Matter, et al—were putting out and they pretty much got lumped in with the lot. Once I'd actually heard 'em and it was clear they were more on the Minor Threat/Second Wind side of the fence, I just never got around to picking up a copy

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of *Can I Say*, mostly because so many of my friends had copies that it almost seemed redundant to procure one of my own. According to the liner notes here, these are the recordings of what was to be their initial album, featuring original vocalist Shawn Brown doing the hollering instead of Dave Smalley, who replaced him. When Brown left, the band went back into the studio, redid the whole shebang with Smalley, and released it as the aforementioned *Can I Say*. Despite maybe some title/lyrical changes, most of the tuneage sounds the same, different singer notwithstanding—the ragers still rage. Baker's guitar is as punchy as ever, and "Circles" still possesses one helluva wicked hook. Both those new to the band and those who've followed 'em a spell will find much to like here. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dischord)

DE HØJE HÆLE:

Skal Vi Aldrig Videre?: CD

This is just great. Danish bouncy, poppy, weirdo punk rock. I don't understand anything about it and I don't want to. The hooks are in me, I couldn't leave if I wanted to. Such a fresh, quirky record, it makes me want to shoot bottle rockets at the moon. A little Shitty Limits, a little Gorilla Angreb, and a little Cola Freaks, but like all three of those groups, bands comparisons do very little justice. —Daryl (Hjernesvind)

DEAD BROTHERS: 5th Sin-Phonic: CD

The gothic country/dark cabaret genre

continues its expansion with the Dead Brothers; another high-quality pick by Voodoo Rhythm a la Those Poor Bastards, O'Death, Munly and the Lee Lewis Harlots, etc. For a primer on the genre, consider some of the pioneers, such as 16 Horsepower, Legendary Shack Shakers, and the Handsome Family. —Jessica T (Voodoo Rhythm, voodoo rhythm.com)

DEMON'S CLAWS: The Defrosting of: LP

I honestly cannot fathom why Demon's Claws are not recognized as one of the greatest rock'n'roll groups around right now. I mean, of course this can be attributed to the fact that their label In The Red can't buy them that distinction through music videos and other vacuous media exposure, but word of mouth should have these guys somewhere around *Miami-era* Gun Club. Evil. Debauched. Fucked up. Great songs. A few years back, these Canadians released *Satan's Little Pet Pig* and it was head and shoulders above their previous efforts. *The Defrosting of* continues that artistic ascent. Jeff Clarke is a great songwriter. His arrangements are strong and his lyrics are compelling. His vocals are at times indecipherable—and the album lacks a lyric sheet—but it's easy to visualize the scenes of degradation he describes...going to a free clinic in the south side of town...being fucking up on ketamine. It's a bad place to be and it convincingly sounds like Demon's Claws are providing reportage of their daily lives.... I can't shake the feeling

that this record at times feels like the 13th Floor Elevators' brilliant last one, largely the work of Stacy Sutherland on his last leg. There is that kind of hopelessness on some of these tracks. It's the second side of *The Defrosting of* that's the burner. "You'll Always Be My Friend" has a real street-level International Submarine Band feel to it...train-shuffle drum beat and lyrics in the form a personal letter. I haven't read too much press on Demon's Claws, but I'm hoping people are picking up on how talented these guys are as musicians. In particular, Ysael Pepin's bass lines are never less than formidable, and, wisely, his work is high in the mix. The dude grooves like a refined Bill Wyman. This review is about as real as they come. What I mean by that is I wasn't sent this record by In The Red. I bought it from Goner then paid to have it shipped out to New Zealand. Sorry. If you're looking for sycophancy, read something else. I'll be damned if this album slips through the cracks. —Ryan Leach (In the Red)

DEVIL'S BRIGADE: Self-titled: CD

Matt Freeman's hallmark, cleanly-picked bass lines and gruff voice are the cornerstone of this raucous collection of early demo songs, plus a half dozen songs in homage to the building of the Golden Gate Bridge. References to ironworkers, labor unions, the Dust Bowl, and more resonate with today's issues. Punk, punkabilly, folk, spaghetti western

and ska influences round out this crisply produced album. Stand out tracks: "Shakedown," "Gentleman of the Road," "Protest Song," "Half Way to Hell." —Jessica T (Hellcat)

DIRECT CONTROL:

Bucktown Hardcore: LP

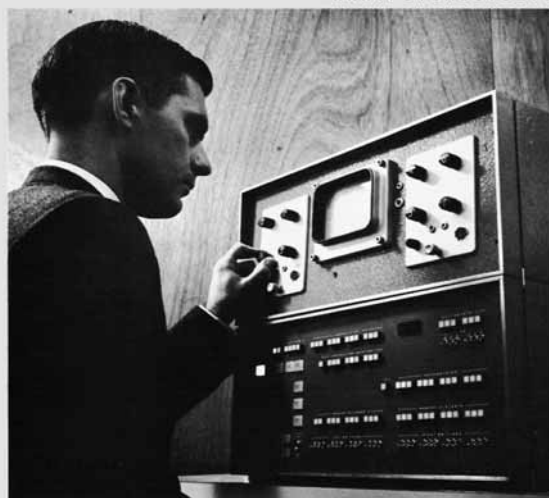
I remember getting this demo a few years back when Municipal Waste and Caustic Christ played a show with Born Dead Icons at the Che Café. Thought it was one of the better demos around. Then, it seems less than a year later, they were one of the bigger bands making the rounds and putting out vinyl. On one twelve inch smashed circle of vinyl you get the *Bucktown Hardcore* demo, the demo from 2002, and the *Public Safety* session from 2006. If you missed out, and like early '80s style hardcore, then now's the time to pick this up. Songs like "What's the Point" and "War All the Time" are ragers, and the stuff that came later is just as good. It's interesting to hear the raw recordings from 2002 as well. They sound more intense during that period. Glad to finally hear it. —M.Avg (Tankcrimes)

EARTHMEN AND STRANGERS /

FAR CORNERS: Split: 7"

Earthmen And Strangers: It's been a long time since I've thought about the Talking Heads as, well, as a punk-punk band. Oh, I understand their history. I get that, but I haven't seen any of their direct influence on punk bands recently. I can't

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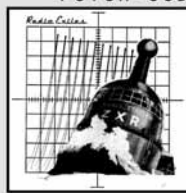


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remember the last time I dropped by a friend's house and they plopped on the Talking Heads. But it's in Ryan Rousseau's capable hands that I have to do some double-thinking. The first half of "Slaves" has that tense, slightly off-kilter, atmospheric-as-an-empty-highways, almost bordering on a warble feel of early Talking Heads. Then the song hits the high gears and blows the doors off so hard, you're digging gravel out of your ears at the end. This song could've easily been on the *Repo Man* soundtrack. Far Corners: Bordering on no-fi, this could be totally shitty, but if you've ever had a soft spot for Supercharger or the Oblivians and you can spot the hidden melodies in a recording that sounds like it was done in someone's kitchen when their mom is making grilled cheese sandwiches, I know you'll find their charms-in-the-rough as appealing as I did. —Todd (Dirt Cult, dirtcultrecords.com / GC, gcrecords.com)

ENABLER:

War Begins with You: Cassette

This starts off like a race, with all members of the band fighting to get to the finish line first. They throw elbows and scream along the way, and the result is some absolutely manic, fast-paced hardcore. Then they come together for the last track, "Symbiosis," and really show everyone what they can do: Destroy (with guitar solos). —MP Johnson (Sacred Plague)

EUNUCH: Self-titled: 7"

This record is a monstrosity. Bass and drum hardcore with distorted vocals held back enough in the mix for the vocalist to really tear into the microphone, and a fourth member credited as contributing only "feedback," which I believe to actually be coming out of a guitar and not any sort of circuit-based noise generator. The result is something like the more realized Godstomper recordings with a lot more sludge influence. While the band provides many obvious nods to the forefathers of early power violence, the record is paced much more in the mid-tempo range, which makes the moments of blazing more surprising and articulate. Some sections are like the slower Man Is The Bastard or His Hero Is Gone songs, while the fast opening of "Carcasses" reminds me of Finnish jazz grind masters Cause For Effect. The aesthetic of the band falls somewhere between power violence and the "mysterious guy" trend, but remains ugly enough to ensure authenticity. Highly, highly recommended. —Ian Wise (Self-released)

FAT BEAVERS:

Still Don't Know What to Do: LP

French band with a horrible name and an interesting palette. Charming accents and decidedly weird lyrics layered over elements of pop punk, indie twinkling, and the occasional hardcore-like blast. I honestly can't tell if they're a funny band that shoots for seriousness every once in a while, or a serious band that's unintentionally funny. I mean, lines

like "uvula is not the horizon" and "advertising world you block my cock, spectacular scenes you suck my dick" are pretty much just nonsense, and there's a song about how the singer has fallen in love with his dentist. So they're a joke band, right? And yet songs like "Hate and Apathy" or "Dead Or Something"—apart from the fact that the dude's vocals are a dead ringer for *Draw Muhammad-era Cobra Skulls*—could almost pass for hardcore with their structure, speed, and unbridled, galloping nervousness. And then "Snowfall" sounds like Onion Flavored Rings. Jesus. I've listened to this one quite a bit and I still can't get a handle on it at all. Co-released by approximately ten different labels aaaaaand the band has apparently broken up. —Keith Rosson (Slow Death)

FEAR OF LIPSTICK: Self-titled: CD

Hard-driving, straight-up punk with an edge is what I would call these boys. I have seen them live and, hopefully, will again sometime soon. Wait—do a "Canada Invades the U.S." tour with The Riptides! (Thank me later after all the cold, hard cash rolls in). "Correction Facility" is a cool tune that anchors this record. "I Wanna Be a Werewolf" is funny, but the animal sounds could have used a bit more snarl. "Summertime" is an awesome song to guide you to the end of this album. I've heard the uninformed compare this band to Teenage Bottlerocket. Doesn't TB get compared to some other band? I can't remember—but I think you get

my drift. Take it as it comes and just give this record a shot. I'll bet you at least eight bucks that you'll agree with me. I will have to write you an I.O.U., however, if you disagree. Times is tight. —Sean Koeppenick (It's Alive)

FINGERS, THE: Isolation: 7" EP

The *Reader's Digest* version of the story: The Fingers (not to be confused with the infamous '90s East L.A. band of the same name) were a band outta Pittsburgh circa 1977. Wanting to garner attention, the sent out this EP in their promo packs instead of cassettes. No one paid much attention, the vast majority of the EP's copies were summarily lost in the void, and the band remained unknown to all but the most ardent collectors, who were more than happy to pay silly prices for copies. Brooklyn's Last Laugh Records has decided to throw a wrench into collector profiteering by culling the three tracks from the original master and reissuing this primal Ramones-via-Detroit punk classic. Is it worth all the hoopla, you ask? Well, I personally don't think any fuggin' 45 is worth four grand, but they were a helluva band and I definitely hear what gets the Killed By Death crowd so worked up. I would imagine this pressing itself is limited, so you'd best hurry before you're paying silly prices for this as well. —Jimmy Alvarado (Last Laugh)

FRANZ NICOLAY:

Luck and Courage: CD

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or another, he's provided valuable services to a slew of my favorite bands as varied as Guignol, The Hold Steady, World/Inferno Friendship Society, and the Star Fucking Hipsters. I've even caught him get on stage with the Subhumans (UK) back in 2006. Having missed his earlier release *Major General*, it took me a bit to wrap my head around this. While filled with multiple instruments such as piano, organ, banjo, and horns, in addition to the standard drums and guitars, the musical eclecticism is subtler than in *World/Inferno*. Lyrically, this hews closely to the illustrative imagery and story-like snippets of the Hold Steady, but delivered with my Nicolay's much cleaner vocals. It's as if these songs are the Greek chorus for a collection of unseen plays. This release ultimately wins me over not as a visceral rock experience, like with many of the bands he's worked with, but as the work of a modern day storytelling minstrel, with his detailed sketches of people and places such as "This Is Not a Pipe" and "James Ensor Redeemed." It's like the Weakerthans by way of highly trained buskers. Definitely worth a contemplative listen. —Adrian (Team Science, teamsciencerecords@gmail.com)

FREESTONE: Church: 7"

At this point, I would venture to guess that most hip to the whole Killed by Death punk rarities scene are well acquainted with the brilliantly dumb punk B-side here, "Bummer Bitch,"

and its creatively crass chorus, "Bummer bitch, you make me sick/ bummer bitch, suck my dick." Not quite as well known, however, is that this San Francisco-based band was, in fact, not a punk band, but one more into the prog rock thang, and the A-side title track, despite some lyrics that scream to be played for your most ardent Jesus-worshippin' relative, has more in common with Jethro Tull than the Ramones. Still, it's not a horrible track by any stretch, and this reissue does include "Bummer Bitch" in all its obnoxious glory, so consider this essential to any short list of mandatory vinyl to pick up as soon as possible. —Jimmy Alvarado (Last Laugh)

FUCK KNIGHTS: Recorded by Gary Burger from the Monks: CDEP

As the title implies, these cats managed to wrangle the lead guitarist/vocalist of '60s cult legends The Monks to twiddle the knobs for 'em. The results of their shared endeavor are four tracks of raw trash rock with '60s influences up the wanger, of course, and a singer who sounds like he's in dire need of a mouthful of throat lozenges. While nothing here is earth shattering or ground breaking, the band handily does what it does and the production keeps it sounding sandblasted without having it sound like it was swathed in bubble wrap and dropped down a deep well. —Jimmy Alvarado (Crustacean)

FULL OF FANCY:

Liquid Nature + The Singles: CD

This is awesome. It's like a happy frappe of jangle, pop punk, surf, and just a hint of garage and '90s indie. I want to say Vivian Girls by way of the Ergs for the sake of a quick and dirty comparison. Having missed the band's first full length, *Sweet Baby Jesus*, this CD is great for playing catch-up, since it includes all their vinyl-only singles appended onto the end of the sophomore eleven-track LP. The LP is solid pop punk across the board (dig the "Then He Kissed" me reference on "Dumb Is Forever"), only breaking the two and a half minute mark once. The singles are a great but more eclectic lot. For instance the Art Of The Underground single has an great harmonized cover of the Descendents' "Marriage," while the song "Friends Forever Tour" off the *Every Wall in the Parlor 7"* sound like the kind of melancholy dream pop that would be at home on Slumberland. I highly recommend picking this up for the good kind of pop fix. —Adrian (Don Giovanni)

GENIUS PARTY: Uncomplicated Songs about Complicated Issues: CD

This is amazing! How is there a band this good from my home state that I've never heard of? Holy crap! I never get this excited about new music anymore! This is like when I first heard The Ergs! a couple years ago, but better because now I get to be the first one to tell everybody else about this badass

new band. *Uncomplicated Songs* is a CD of fast, fun, party punk played by grownups who know what they are doing. The lyrics are smart and dead-on relatable for twenty-somethings. What an excellent surprise for this month! Highly recommended! —Lauren Trout (Self-released, DFW.com/geniusparty)

GESTAPO KHAZI: Escalators: 7"

The Gun Club and Flesheaters comparisons certainly apply, and like those two bands that drew from older sources of music that shaped their sound, Gestapo Khazi work a magic that makes it sound timeless. A little bit of the blues, some country, a surf guitar style, and a punk attitude, and a group of guys who craft solid songs. "Escalator" cruises at a nice pace. The perfect song for a late summer, hotter-than-hell afternoon. The vocals are perfect: a back and forth between agitation and resignation. If noir films used rock as soundtracks, this song would be a perfect choice. "The Atomic Kind" picks up the pace considerably with a bass that weaves in and out of jittery guitars, and before you know it, the song is over. —M.Avrq (Eradicator, organic_core@yahoo.com)

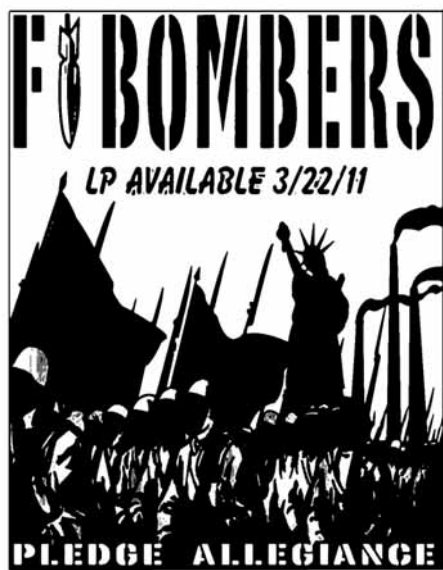
GG ALLIN & ANTISEEN:

Murder Junkies: LP

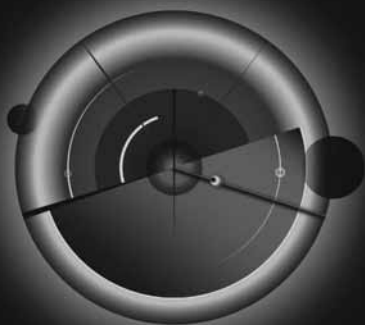
There's a song on the new Queens LP called "I Knew GG When He Was A Wimp." I *didn't* know GG when he was a wimp, but he did send me promo records back then, when he was covering album tracks off the fourth

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Ohio Express album and suchlike—he was sort of a laughingstock at that point for attempting to foist off his blow-dried, denim-vest rock-pop as the product of some manner of Dead Boy-ish badass. Aaaaand, of course, as we all know, somewhere along the way, the wannabe-badass-that-was mutated into that big tub of jockstraps, ink and poop that we all knew and loved. Against all odds ((and possibly having something to do with his later, blunderbuss approach to recording)) GG left a number of legitimately decent records in his wake ((though none of them were found wearing Brian Action's ex-girlfriend's skirt when they died)); on this picture disc, ol' Vomitoise is teamed up with Antiseen, who probably deserve a medal of some sort for playing something resembling punk rock twenty or so years ago, when the world was just starting to shit its pants over grunge, and couldn't be bothered with such downmarket drivel ((and, speaking of pants and Antiseen, i went to go see Antiseen [[“i went and seen Antiseen?” That almost sounds more correct]] in Milwaukee in 1990 or so, and i was wearing some kinda funky purple pants, and, as i am walking thru the bar, this guy in a leather jacket walking past me lowers his shoulder and bashes it into my chest, like how kids do in the hall in junior high when they want to fight. He disparagingly comments “nice pants” my way. Because, you know, there were SOOOOO many Antiseen fans in Milwaukee in 1990, it was

important to keep the poseurs with the weird pants ostracized. LET'S FIGHT ABOUT MY PANTS! FIGHT ME JIMMY! FIGHT ME JIMMY!)). The result is a whole bunch of songs about murder and ruckus, with GG howling his usual vocal depredations over Antiseen's fuzzed-up yokel punk crunch. This doesn't strike me as quite the same unholy caliber as “Brutality and Bloodshed For All,” which is probably his best later work, i guess ((i'm actually still partial to the seven-inch records released in 1982 and 1983, myself —“Gimme Some Head” “You Hate Me & I Hate You” “No Rules” and that “Hard Candy Cock” ep)), but if you're of a receptive temperament, maybe you should buy this and figure out if you miss him yet or not. Probably interesting from a cultural standpoint just to hear GG go all Rollins on “War in My Head” and “I Hate People,” but this is pretty high up the list of Picture Discs Displaying Pictures of Guys Of Which I Really Have No Need To See Further Pictures as well. **BEST SONG:** “Kill The Police” **BEST SONG TITLE:** “Rape, Torture, Terminate and Fuck” **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** I almost but not quite met GG—he walked past me at a Ramones/Iggy Pop show in Chicago, when i was leaning against the bar drinking abandoned buckets of beer. It took me a few seconds to realize whom he was; by the time i realized it was GG and i went to follow him, i'd lost him in the crowd. —Rev. Nerb (Rusty Knuckles)

GO RYDELL: *The Golden Age*: CD

Okay, so follow me on this one. To me, the Shook Ones sound like the more emo leanings of Lifetime as filtered through Kid Dynamite's hardcore. Go Rydell, in turn, sounds like the hardcore tendencies of Kid Dynamite as filtered through the melody and vocals of Shook Ones. And at fourteen minutes, *The Golden Age* is just the right length for a poppy, melodic hardcore album. Like the Shook Ones or the Brokedowns, these guys take a well-worn sound but put enough energy and craft into that it sounds fresh and vital. —Adrian (Black Numbers)

GONADS, THE: *Glorious Bastards*: CD

New release from this long-running U.K. punk band. Songs about drinking, screwing, and more drinking. There's also a brief history lesson included on “Billy McFadzean” as well. I had to laugh at “Badly Done” when the Lionel Ritchie reference popped up. “John King Is a Veggie” and “Re-Infected” are my favorites on this eighteen-track record. The only downfall here is “Tesco Lorry,” which is a direct lift from a New York Dolls song. Otherwise this is an enjoyable listen that will go well with your favorite lager. —Sean Koepenick (Longshot)

GOOD MEN DIE LIKE DOGS:

Postscript: 7”

Good Men Die Like Dogs musically remind me of Bay Area pop punk,

specifically, early Green Day. It's quite good musically but that's not their strong point; that would be the lyrics. Each song has a feel of nostalgic anti-nostalgia. They look over past glories without wallowing in them (one of my biggest problems with pop punk). Instead, it's reflective. The point of the songs is about moving forward while referencing the past in order not to forget it. The record, as a whole, sounds like a letter to a friend. This isn't just me spitting; the lyric sheet is actually laid out like a letter, which suggests that's the band's intention. The character in the songs is addressing someone that they have a long history with. He smiles back on the old days as he encourages pushing onward: “Salud/Goodbye/Farewell to the notions these were the best times of our lives/So long/Make haste/Chasing down tomorrow will surely bring the better days.” My problem with the pop punk genre is its smarmy, tattooed, shoe-gazing sentimentality. Good Men turn this regressive trend on its head. —Craven Rock (Tortilla Chip, goodmendiellikedogs.com)

GOODNIGHT LOVING, THE: *The Goodnight Loving Supper Club*: CD

I'm bad at terms, so throw this first part away if you are a music historian or even a music reviewer yourself—perhaps on a blog, on a brick wall, or the user side of a bathroom stall door. Recent days have given us a smorgasbord of post-post-psych rock, with parts folk, parts drug rock, '60s and '70s-inspired stuff.

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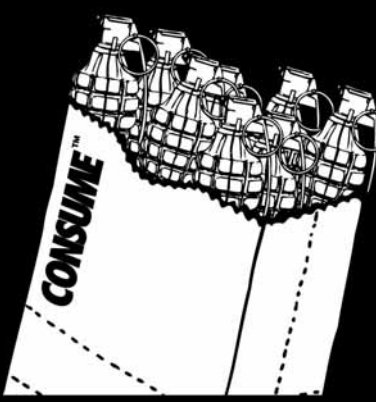
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Real flowing lyrics and harmonies, wandering guitars, folksy beats, but with good rocking pace and sometimes even a real kickass energy. I imagine it being a massive scene in Brooklyn, but it's probably pretty wide-reaching and I'm just being mean. When it's bad, it's baaaaad, noodling, and forced. When it's good—here's the second part of the review—it's like Thee Oh Sees or The Fresh And Onlys, you know? Goodnight Loving are surviving in Milwaukee (makes them even more lovable) and dang good. I didn't connect with all the songs, but I like the sound, and the good songs are great. It's got the folksy psych garage vibe, with sounds that seem to descend from true old country, and it works with them—really peppy and fun with that energy I was mentioning. It's a style working from the past but the band feels young and fresh. On some of their review blogs, this album has been described as a lot cleaner than previous rumbly efforts (I haven't heard them until now and am gonna check their other records out). But it doesn't sound like they got rid of the spirit. —Speedway Randy (Dirtnap)

GOVERNMENT FLU:
Fuck Poetics + Demo 2008: CD

The two 7"s collected on this CD by this band from Warsaw (it's in Poland, dude) hark back to the sound of Boston hardcore circa 1997, but they spare us not only the Youth Of Today worship via the lyrics but also analogies to American football! The lyricist is angry and depressed,

and over matters not as juvenile as whether somebody takes a drink or feeling some false sense of betrayal. If you are partial to the youth crew revival sounds of more than a decade past, but are turned off by superficial, privileged jock attitudes, check this out. —Vincent (Nikt Nic Nie Wie / Refuse, refuserecords@gmail.com)

HAMBURGLARS, THE:
Robble Robble Robble Robble: 7" EP

Four guys who dress up as the Hamburglar™ and sing songs about cheeseburgers that occasionally sound somewhat like "The Shadow Knows" by Link Wray. No, you're right, I didn't think of it first. I cede the point. BEST SONG: "Shamrock Shake" BEST SONG TITLE: "Shamrock Shake" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Rob Rob Robble – Rob Rob Rob / Rob Robble Robble – Rob Robble Rob / Robble Robble Robble – Robble Robble Rob / Rob Robble Rob / Robble Robble / Shamrock Shake!" Ah, geez, I gave away the ending. —Rev. Nørð (Robble)

HEAVY CREAM: Danny: LP

The needle on my turntable had been broken for what seemed like forever and the record I missed listening to most was this. First thing I did when I finally got a new needle was throw *Danny* on and have a one man dance party in my living room. Twelve songs running the rock'n'roll gamut of partying too hard, Tina Turner admiration, and dancing. Heavy Cream's sound is '70s rock

and punk-influenced (but without the masturbatory soloing) and Runaways comparisons aren't unwarranted. Three songs are repeated from their self-titled 7", but I think the recordings used for the album are different and less muddy than the 7". "Watusi" and "Lava Lamp" will be stuck in your head for days. Check 'em out live. The drummer pounds like nobody's business and the singer has the crazy eyes. Oh, and I forgot there was a download coupon with the record. I could have been listening to it all along! —Sal Lucci (Infinity Cat, infinitycat.com)

HOLY MOUNTAIN, THE:
Here Is No Exit: LP

Charging d-beats and gang vocals. Scandi hardcore by way of Florida. The A side is four new blunt, guttural rippers, while the B side is some tracks from various splits. Solid stuff all around. And for all the shit talking I've done on pic discs, this record almost makes me want to take it back. Bleak graphics that really fit the music and artistically are pretty breathtaking. Compared to other bands on No Idea, I never really gave The Holy Mountain much attention, but this record makes we want to dig a little deeper into their catalog. —Daryl (No Idea)

HOMEOWNERS: Light and Vision: 7"

Very catchy and well put together slices of fun. Three of them. My favorite track is "Ant Trails," with its vague lyrics that somehow make perfect sense when read repetitively. I

find myself listening to the B side over and over again and, somehow, the risk of carpal tunnel syndrome is worth it. There's only one boy in this band. I just realized that. Can't wait to see this band live. Definitely worth checking this out. —Rene Navarro (Margin Mouth)

HOSTAGE CALM: Self-titled: CD

Melodic hardcore heroes Hostage Calm return with an album which fuses the band's early sound, calling to mind Kid Dynamite or mid-late '80s era Dischord bands like Embrace and Dag Nasty, with some of their indie rock influences, namely The Smiths. The fusion of indie rock with hardcore roots on this record creates a sound that is simultaneously melodic and catchy while remaining as in your face and intense as previous efforts. Chris Martin transitions from the Kevin Seconds-sounding shouts of the previous *Lens* LP (2008), to a clean singing style that suits his voice well. The vocal harmonies present in several songs further enhance the overall vocal quality, and Martin's intelligent lyrics make for songs worthy of epic sing-alongs at shows, in the car, or in your living room. The album opener "A Mistrust Earned," immediately demonstrates Hostage Calm's new sound. "Rebel Fatigues," follows with prominent use of piano, and driving chorus parts that get the head bobbing. "Affidavit," is a popular track the band play live frequently, and "Where the Waters Call Home," a poetic argument towards ignoring the differences between people regardless of race, geographic location, or other difference, follows it. A

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few tracks later is "Young Professionals," one of my favorite tracks on this album. It is a bit of an introspective song, as one of the title's young professionals confronts and questions the values of the life he is living, at least for a brief moment. The rest of the album is as good, if not better, with live favorites "Jerry Rumspringer," and "War on a Feeling," closing out the album. These songs rank right up with "Young Professionals," among my favorite tracks on the album, and best represent the new sound of Hostage Calm. While all fans of the band's previous efforts might not appreciate this new direction, I'd encourage them to give this album a chance. Those new to the band should grab this album and not look back. They will not be disappointed. —Paul J. Comeau (Run For Cover)

HOUSE BOAT: *Processing Complaints*: CDEP

A five-song sliver from this band which features ex-Steinways and Ergs in their lineup. "Payment Plan" is a catchy ditty that may have you spilling your beer when it is all over. I don't know if "Kids of the Black Sun" is a Copyrights or Soundgarden nod. Either way, it's a cool song. "The Self-Aware Octopus" may be referring back to their debut—which I just got and that's ass-backwards, I know! I will listen to it soon. —Sean Koepenick (Traffic Street)

HUMMS, THE: *Lemonland*: LP

This band is never bad, but are at their best when they're straightforward on such tracks as "Fat Bat" and "Blood

Sucking Vampire." This definitely showcases the fact that this group of musicians have some cool influences and can play different stuff, but, as an album, I would say the A side lacks cohesion, with the B side picking up the pace but still not blowing your mind. At its best, this sounds like a good band to see opening for Black Lips, White Stripes, or No Bunny. At its worst, it sounds like a band trying to throw some noise together in a vain attempt to sound awesome like Sonic Youth, Jesus And Mary Chain, or Velvet Underground. —Rene Navarro (Bachelor)

INSUBORDINATES: *Self-titled*: LP

About a quarter-century or so ago I heard a story from an incident on an Anti-Nowhere League/Damned tour where Rat Scabies of the Damned and Winston of the ANWL were backstage, and Rat bet Winston that Winston could not possibly gross Rat out, so, in answer, Winston grabbed a carrot off the Damned's deli tray, slathered it in salad dressing, shoved it up his ass, then pulled it out and ate it, sending Rat ((and all others)) fleeing from the room in revulsion ((i don't blame 'em. I hate carrots)). Well, if said carrot would have been as large as the Fat Boy nuclear bomb, and had a plutonium center, and Winston would have shoved it up ((("Music For Pleasure" avant-saxist)) Lol Coxhill's butt instead, until it came out his mouth, and went all thru his saxophone like a big orange Play-Doh® Fuzzy Pumper Barber Shop™, and the biggest end would have come

out the sax and gone up Rat's butt too, then all the way up to his hair, then exploded, completely obliterating the dressing room in a hail of atomized saxophone tin, shredded bass strings, guitar necks, carrot pus, air-raid sirens and butt stuff, and somebody would have been recording this whole to-do from the soundboard, and the recording survived because the fat-ass soundman was standing in front of the soundboard polishing his Maglite® when the thermonuclear carrot went off, thus protecting the recording, then THAT recording might sound sort of like a demo version of "Nagasaki," which starts this album. *THE BEST ALBUM-STARTING INSTRUMENTAL SINCE "HEAT SEEKER" BY THE RIP OFFS, WHICH WAS ALSO PROBABLY ABOUT WINSTON'S SASSY CARROT!!!* Most of the other songs have words, and sound, curiously, like The Freeze playing Die Kreuzen songs in some kinda highly theoretical garage/surf rock context. I suspect this may be The Real Deal™. *Quick, Wilma, another deli tray!* BEST SONG: "Nagasaki" BEST SONG TITLE: Perhaps "The Outer Limits," because i was always scared of that one with Reese Fowler and his mutated eyeballs. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Ends with a cover of the Tempests' "Rockin' Rochester USA," which i forgot to mention. —Rev. Nørð (Cowabunga)

INTELLIGENCE, THE: *Males*: CD

There are times where I enjoy listening

to music that I don't have a firm grasp on... as long as it doesn't feel like it's making fun or talking down to me. There's an easy bubbling-along-to feel of The Intelligence, but it's a weird bubbling, like bongs filled with cooking oil or vitamin powder fizzing in beer. You can see through it, but it's still a little bit strange. It's garage rock with some tasteful interior decorating, but nothing too precious. And that makes sense when the skirt's lifted on *Males*. Take the public-access charm of Steaming Wolf Penis, the balance-and-compound-fracture crash into disintegrating triangles of musical notes of The A-Frames, and the Buzzcocks-references-worn-as-warm-sweaters of the FM Knives (no arbitrary references. The Intelligence were in all of those bands previously), and you get *Males*. The only asterisk, literally, is that the bleep out the word fuck in "White Corvette" and it's spelled f*ck in the lyric sheet. No value assessment. Just thought it was strange and it brought attention to itself. Very fuckin' likable. —Todd (In The Red)

IRON CHIC: *Not Like This*: CD

Not Like This comes with a large back patch that I errantly peeked at before listening to the disc, which gave me the impression that my first listen was going to be a crusty experience. Imagine then, my surprise to hear some seriously competent mid-tempo punk a la Hot Water Music blaring from my speakers instead. Ten songs delivered in about thirty minutes, the disc delivers



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nary a dud. Nicely mixed and not too derivative, this is totally worth checking out if you are into the No Idea type stuff. —Garrett Barnwell (86'd)

JAIL WEDDINGS: *Love Is Lawless*: CD

I've seen this band three or four times live at this point, so it's nice to finally have something to listen to outside of the confines of an eastside club. The band—with its ten or so members, the Three Penny Opera-tics of the lead singer with girl group-like backing vocals, and unrock-like instrumentation of saxophone, glockenspiel, violin—strikes me as the West Coast World/Inferno Society. There isn't an exact one-to-one comparison between the two, as Jail Weddings tunes down the punk and cabaret influence of World Inferno and instead amps up the '60s soul and garage. Epic garage symphonies would actually be a very apt description of what's going on here. When it takes off like on "One of These Days," "What Did You Do With My Gun?," and the charmingly rad duet "When We're Together," the album really hits some positive highs and more than justifies its existence. —Adrian (White Noise)

JESU: *Heart Ache* and *Dethroned*: 2 x CD/2 x LP

It has been written (and this reviewer agrees) that the EP is the proper medium for Jesu (pronounced Yay-sue). So what might be better than what is essentially a double EP? The first disc, *Heart Ache* is only two

songs, but combined they clock in at around forty minutes. *Heart Ache* is actually a re-release of Jesu's first EP, released in 2004. Being that Justin Broadrick (who essentially is Jesu) had just broken up his industrial project, Godflesh, the similarities are much more evident than on Jesu's most recent work. The electronic smash of the drums especially strikes one of the same pummeling that Broadrick's industrial act offered. The two tracks aren't entirely cutthroat, though. The second track, "Ruined," starts with a five minute, minimalist piano taken straight from the M83 playbook. It's quite pleasurable in its own right, but all that is taken away when the churning guitars kick in. The second EP, *Dethroned*, was originally started in 2004 but not completed until 2010. It's interesting to note the range of Broadrick's music on these four songs. While the Godflesh guitar aspects are occasionally there, there is also the shoegazing influence rearing its head throughout. Like much of Jesu's previous releases, the sounds are always compatible and work well together. Furthermore, the emotional qualities of other Jesu works is still here: that of sadness, dreariness, and morose connection to one's own psyche, while it holds hands with this little glimmer of something better. While I wasn't sure about this double album at first, repeated listens have shown me that it's an efficient medium for understanding the full range of Jesu's sound. That being said, it might

be a good place for a new listener to begin to check out the band. —Kurt Morris (Hydra Head)

JOHN WESLEY COLEMAN: *Bad Lady Goes to Jail*: CD

Mr. Coleman dances a fine line between sloppy '70s punk and trashier '60s fare (and when I say "trashy," I don't mean stereotypical and Farfisa-saturated, but rather in the more primitive and less polished sense), sometimes sounding like an odd mix between the Velvet Underground and, oh, the Zeros' more up-tempo efforts. All told, this is some pretty good stuff. —Jimmy Alvarado (Goner)

JOSIE COTTON: *Pussycat Babylon*: CD

I so wanted to like this. I still have a soft spot for new wave pop from my childhood. But it just didn't capture the free spirit of the early '80s. A little over produced for my liking? Not sure, but the remake of "Johnny Are you Queer?" sure didn't stand up to the original recording. —Donofthedeath (Scruffy)

JOYCE MANOR / SUMMER VACATION: Split: 7"

Joyce Manor: I've been told they're a grower of a band. First listen: oi-folk with a *Happy Days* vibe and a lot of "I really mean it" sing-a-long parts. But not half as bad as that may sound. They still haven't completely clicked with me, but I wouldn't be surprised if they do in the future. There's something very cool and just odd that some members of Summer

Vacation were eight or nine years old when *Razorcake* started ten years ago. It's cool because one of my main theories is being proven true: DIY punk is a force unto itself. It doesn't need outside forces to drive it (like emo, ska punk, screamo) to keep it viable. It's somewhat odd because I'm double these dudes' age, they have to hide out if they stay at a bar show after they play, and yet they're picking up on musical cues that've been relevant to me over time: J.Church, a little bit of Pretty Boy Thorson, Minor Threat sheep tattoos, some Defiance, Ohio and Billy Bragg, the straight-edge lifestyle, and an understated layering of instruments. They're an excellent, local band and I'm looking forward to hearing more of them. —Todd (Muy Autentico)

JULIUS C: *OK, OK*: CD

If you like music with cheesy handclaps, goofy horns, and yawn-inducing keyboards, then this record is for you. I can see why NYC hipsters are all over this band like flies on cow dung. Bland, overdone funk workouts that even Weezer wouldn't touch. Oh, and having all four band members sporting the same hairstyle and facial hair is beyond retarded. —Sean Koepenick (Self-released)

KIDNAPPERS, THE: *Will Protect You*: CD

It's a wonder why these guys aren't bigger than Christ at the moment. Super catchy power pop that's as powerful as it is sugary and, well, poppy. A quick reference to throw

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out is The Boys, and more currently, The Impulse International. Definitely rooted in the '70s, with songs about girls, girls, and one about a prostitute ("Sally"). Strong riffs, infectious melodies, and it's all fun, fun, fun. A good mix of cooks, like "Milkshake," "She Won't Come Home," and my favorite of the album, "Nothing's Gonna Change," then there's the slightly reserved type songs, "Heartbeat," "Tomorrow you Feel Better," and the like. Great album, without a doubt. —M.Avrq (Alien Snatch!)

KIT: *Invocation*: CD

At first, I rolled my eyes at the press release, but then I realized that there are actually "Accomplished Musicians" in this band, so it makes sense. I've just gotten used to seeing teenage garage bands pay a publicity rep to write up a glowing press release of their "revolutionary and awe-inspiring" (but actually mediocre) first release. This is a pretty legit indie band though. They've done splits with Thurston Moore/Kim Gordon and Deerhoof. Oh, and it says that Mike Watt plays bass with the band sometimes. But more important than press release credentials, I'm really into the music on this album. It has a lot of distortion, but in a really pretty kind of Kill Rock Stars kind of way. There are vocals, but the band's focus is definitely instrumental. It sounds like Kit should have been around twenty years ago, but I like them now anyway. —Lauren Trout (Upset The Rhythm!, UpsetTheRhythm.co.uk)

KITTY LITTLE / SCIENTIFIC MAPS:

Split: EP

Kitty Little remind me a little bit of Superchunk. Maybe it's because both bands have a song that says "back of the bus"? They play guitar-driven indie pop that has a roughness, like they're more influenced by punk than the Beatles. Listening to this, you would never suspect that Matto's a raging hardcore punk guitar player (Resist Control, Give Up, JBA, etc.) Whereas, Scientific Maps sound like maybe they have been influenced by mid era Beatles—bouncy rhythms, a piano, some brass, jangly guitar... Only 300 pressed. —M.Avrq (Peterwalkee)

KLASSE KRIMINALE: *The Rise and Fall of the Stylish Kids*...: LP

Umpteenth release by this antifascist oi band that's been putting out records for over twenty years. The band sings in Italian, but they've provided a lyric sheet with English translations and comics, ala Fly's insert on the Pinhead Gunpowder side of their split with Dillinger Four. I have no idea how a band that's been around since 1985 still manages to come across as excited about punk rock, but Klasse Kriminale does, and it's pretty great. The music's pretty standard streetpunk fare—but shit, are they really copying anything? Seems like a band that's been around this long has probably helped define the genre rather than ape it. Translations are a little spotty here and there, but that only adds to the charm. Beautiful colored vinyl, extensive packaging, and

armfuls of sincerity. Not something I ever would have picked up on my own, but the band's enthusiasm carries them through here. Fans, take note. —Keith Rosson (Contra)

KNUCKLEHEAD: *Hearts on Fire*: CD

I'd ask how a killer band that's been around for fifteen years could remain as underappreciated as Knucklehead, but that would be silly. Everyone knows that there are tons of amazing bands out there that are overlooked, right? In any event, Calgary's Knucklehead is a rare pop punk band that's been around since the mid-1990s pop punk heyday, yet survived through the passing of that one-time major jolt. There are a lot of other influences at play, too, but this is basically a throwback pop punk release, informed by a decade and a half of going at it. We're not talking "la la" beach-y pop. Instead, Squirtgun-esque riffs prevail, with a hint of fashion/1990s spike punk. This thing is so retro, I got confused, turned on my TV, and tried to tune in to a new episode of *Married... with Children*. We can dream, right? —Art Ettinger (Stumble, stumblerecords.com)

LION SIZED / ACCORDION CRIMES:

Split: 7"

Lion Sized: Solid, bass-heavy noise rock along the same lines as Jesus Lizard. Accordion Crimes: a bit more Birthday Party grind employed here, with occasional blurs of full-on skronk breaking up any potential monotony. Both bands adroitly know when to

apply the "heavy." Good split. —Jimmy Alvarado (Cash Cow)

MAAKUNTARADIO:

Ehka Huomenna Kaikki on Toison: CD


Huh. Musically, they remind me a bit of Dan Webb & The Spiders—there's the same fat guitar tone and snappy drum backbone. But the energy just isn't there; Maakuntaradio sounds like a withdrawn, very subdued version of a '60s garage band. The first few songs are interesting if only because they're sung in Finnish—but it gets pretty blasé pretty damn fast. They never turn shit up into the red or, hell, even the orange or mildly bright yellow. Muted garage pop songs in which the dude never sounds like he's remotely pissed about anything or even that interested in his own lyrics. The packaging here was dark and promising, but the band, instead of coming out swinging and howling, stepped from their corner like a rice cake with a headache and a hula hoop. —Keith Rosson (Airiston)

MACRONYMPHA:

Cut Ups, Drones, and Other Weird: LP

Harsh noise gives me a headache. It's all one circuit run through distortion and delay and set to run for C-10, C-20, C-45, whatever. The entire genre defies any sort of real explanation. But this actually makes sense to me. Macronympha side step the power electronics craze with actual noise (supposedly "metaljunk bashed against each other") that is then sampled onto tape and looped with other similar samples. The stereo panning

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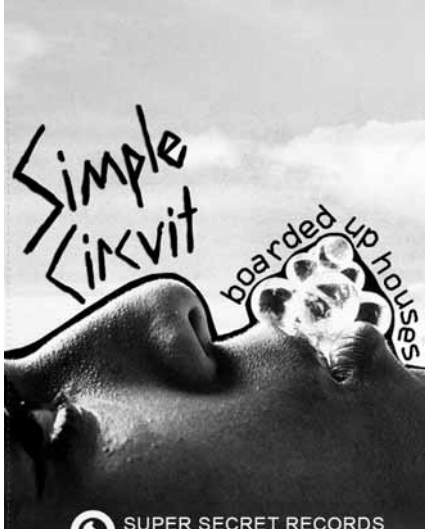


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makes all the difference in the world to me, as the parts separate themselves in each ear and then converge in your brain like Robert Monroe's *Hemisynch* series (terrible reference for anything music-based, I know). However awkward the sounds might be, they are somehow completely engaging. The samples for this record were recorded way back in 1993, but tracked specifically for this release this year in Alabama. If you're going to check out one noise release in this whole craze going on now, side step all the black metal shit and pick this up instead. —Ian Wise (Premier Sang)

**MADISON BLOODBATH /
ANCHOR ARMS: Split: 7"**

Still life with half-filled Jameson bottle. This 7" came with a secret Madison Bloodbath decoder ring. It just says, "Everything negative is really positive." It's like an inverse of early Against Me!, where instead of swelling belief in positive change, there's this sweltering dwelling in dark places and existential anguish. (And if that sounds too square hat to you: it's the time you realize you've been fooling yourself, life don't mean anything, and you're in a dark, cold place like inside the "refrigerator of the soul" when the door's closed.) The Bloodbath paradox is that they sing and play so convincingly and with so much verve, while simultaneously proclaiming defeat, self-dishonesty, and decay. Anchor Arms: More saxophone! I have more tolerance than the average listener for "Fest

music"—gruff vocals, anthemic, guitar-driven melodic punk rock, but, being so, I've listened to so much of it by now, that it takes something else—like ragged saxophone integrated into the middle, not just the beginning and end—to really draw me in. Not offensive, but not clearly separated from the densely populated pack. —Todd (Kiss Of Death)

**MADISON BLOODBATH /
CALVINBALL: Split: 7"**

Still life with a three-quarters empty Jameson bottle. The yin-yang of Madison Bloodbath is the mess of Matt, the main singer, and the not-obvious proficiency of the rest of the band. Because if Matt wasn't a mess, it'd be too slick. If the band wasn't composed of skilled musicianship, it'd be a hot mess. The country flavoring is more like fingerprints or the taste from an oak barrel than a hayseed, getting kicked by a mule in a bandana *Hee Haw* parody. That works, also. Plug that into the Lookout Records amp sitting in the corner and play. Calvinball: This English band's first song sounds like the vocalist is mostly reading the lyrics over the music. Sometimes, the entire band joins in, and that's the most like singing. He sounds pretty grumpy, disaffected, and defeated. The second song is more singy. Reminds me of a straight-ahead, more workman version of No Choice: poppy English punk with melodies, a gruff voice, and up-high guitar parts. Improves with repeat visits. This is the

fifth installment of pairings of English and American punk bands. A great idea. —Todd (All In Vinyl)

**MADISON BLOODBATH /
SUNNYSIDE: Split: 7"**

Madison Bloodbath: Still life with an empty Jameson bottle. Lyrically, Madison Bloodbath has some self-esteem issues and they're drowning in alcohol. And not "Yay! Partying! alcoholism," but scars-across-the-liver alcoholism. And the music's both celebratory and brooding. Shades of country music inserted firmly into the form of punk rock Hot Water Music explored, but it's neither curdling like milk in whiskey nor hard to choke down. For reasons that aren't so clear, even to myself, it's been a slow, cautious grow with Madison Bloodbath, and I now consider myself a fan. Sunnyside: Jason, one of the vocalists could do stunt double work as a blown-out speaker, if that speaker sung about prescription drug abuse and shattered-glass nostalgia that can never be put back together right. The bands follows suit. It sounds like they're battling psychosis on daily basis... all to a beat you can tap along to in a Fifteen-esque way. As an aside, the cover art's the best *Roadhouse*-inspired illustrations, ever. Craig Horky's a master. —Todd (ADD, addrecs.com)

**MEAN JEANS / WHITE WIRES:
Split: 7"**

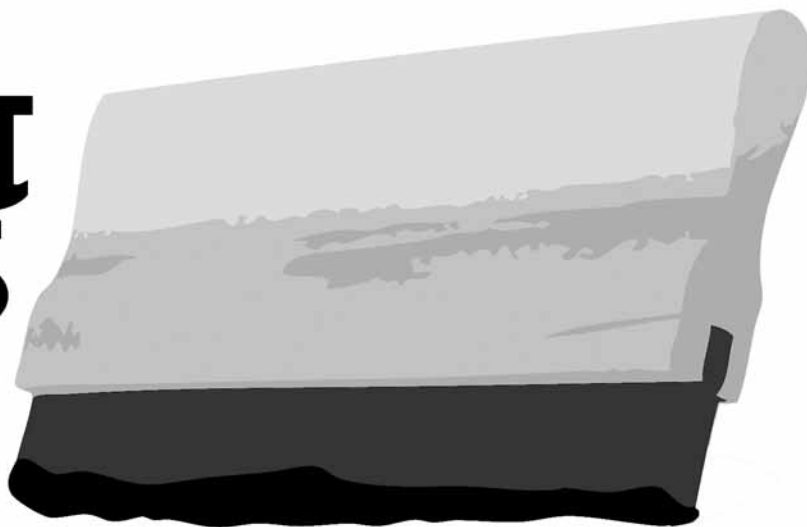
Mean Jeans: Could probably handcuff me to a gorilla and shit

on my chest (Mean Jeans and/or the gorilla) and I'd still forgive 'em because their music's so fun, so the right type of stupid, so bouncy, so punch-a-disco-ball and find out that thing's really cut glass and you're bleeding great, that although they're the obvious descendants of the Ramones, it just means they know how to party. Mean Jeans are awesome. White Wires: If anyone hasn't said it already, I'd like to stake the claim that the White Wires are Canada's new millennium punk answer to The Carpenters. And those who know their music history, know how glossy-PG-13-on-the-surface, totally-fucked-gorilla-shit-at-the-core The Carpenters were. (Said as a compliment.) I'm no sociologist, but if White Wires become more popular, their tunes will probably be whistled by serial killers and soccer moms with equal relish, and I can't deny this song is catchy as all hell. —Todd (Dirtnap)

**MEASURE, THE [SA]: "Get It Over
With" b/w "Van Houten": 7"**

This review is just a thinly-veiled excuse to let you know that the Measure [SA] broke up, and that makes me sad. I raise my glass to all of the stuffed-beaver memories, the accidental urination, the warmth they've shown over the past several years, the great catalog of music they've left behind, and Lauren's on-going friendship. This was their eighteenth release. —Todd (No Idea)

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MODERN ACTION:
Molotov Solution: CD

This is something to behold. This is punk rock in its purest form, in my opinion. The music bounces and throws you around. If you're not outright jumping around the room, your legs are bouncing and your hands are tapping. The words have something to say, but know how to balance with some fun. I've got a hunch that I'd be gleefully picking pieces of my skull out of the back wall upon seeing them play live. It makes sense that there are members of The Bodies involved. You can hear it. Everything about this disc rules. I'm going on the hunt for more Modern Action *now!* —Ty Stranglehold (Modern Action)

MUNLEY & THE LUPERCALIANS:
Petr & the Wulf: CD

A Slim Cessna member offers his take on a tale most famously recounted in a symphony by Prokofiev and a Disney cartoon. The music here is dark, rootsy, and banjo-driven, with each tune offering a soliloquy of sorts for each of the characters in lyrics angled more at adults than children. This is apparently the first of an effort that will unfold over multiple discs. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

MURDERESS:
The Last Thing You Ever See...: LP

Dark and haunting metallic crust that paints a picture of a dark world. A fitting soundtrack for a modern day horror house. There is an element I just can't pin

down that makes me think of witches. The vocals are pulled back in the mix a bit and use a liberal amount of reverb or echo to recreate a sound of a woman screaming in an abandoned church. The guitar riffs add that black metal tone to create textured ambience that sounds like fear amongst the heavy chords that are played. The drums drive and accent the notes to accentuate the power. There is a bit of dirtiness that I like coming from the bass that you can hear it on its own while still adding to mix. The band has a sound that I would compare as a mix of Kylesa meets Agrimonia. The ability to create a musical soundscape with emotion catches my attention and to do it consistently sells me every time. A solid release. —Donofthedeath (Aborted Society)

NAILS: Unsilent Death: CD

While I was skeptical about ex-Terror guitarist Todd Jones playing grindcore, this recently re-released album gets a resounding "Hell yes!" Blazing fast at points, and slow and heavy at others, this rager is everything I'd ask for in a grindcore album. The vocals are a little more intelligible than the norm, and features many parts that make you want to scream along. With ten tracks clocking in at just under thirteen minutes, and songs ranging from thirty seconds, to nearly four minutes, the band demonstrates that they can blast out short numbers with the best of them, and also flex their song-writing abilities on longer songs. Grind fans everywhere will appreciate

every second of this. I know I do. —Paul J. Comeau (Southern Lord)

NATURAL CHILD: Self-titled: 7"

I've had this 7" for a few months, picked it up at my local record store because it had a sticker saying "Ex-Horribly Wrong." The Horribly Wrong is my absolute favorite Bloomington, IN band. They came and went before I moved to Bloomington, but I've been lucky enough to see them twice at reunion shows. Natural Child hails from Nashville, TN, and features Horribly Wrong bassist/co-singer Seth Murray. The man is something of an enigma. I only met him a few times before he left Bloomington. He's certainly friendly enough every time I talk with him, but for some reason, Natural Child has not played Bloomington and there is no mention of any Horribly Wrong connection on the label's website. A damn shame! Four sing-a-long, tongue-in-cheek dumb rock'n'roll songs about teenage crack smokers, pity fucking, and horny mothers. Definitely not polished but not as low-fi as The Horribly Wrong. Hopefully I'll be able to see them live soon. Natural Child seems to be picking up steam, as they tour frequently and played some of those Scion-sponsored garage rock shows. —Sal Lucci (Infinity Cat, infinitycat.com)

NEGATIVE APPROACH: Self-titled: 7"

I have never understood why this 7" has been unavailable for so long while the band's far inferior (but far

from unlistenable) *Tied Down* LP has remained in print. Now this record has been reissued, and it makes even less sense. I heard this for the first time when I was thirteen years old and listening to it again on this reissue makes me feel the same way I did back then. The thin, raw production sounds just as fresh and caustic as it before I heard 10,000 other bands (and started about one hundred of my own) trying to cop this sound. The song "Nothing" makes more sense to me than Jean Paul Sartre, and I love it. My only complaint is that the "updated" cover art (a Photoshop rendering of the original *Exorcist* cover) looks terrible. —Ian Wise (Touch And Go)

NOFX / SPITS: Split: 7"

Not necessarily a split that I'd ever envision hearing, but it really works. And that's not all the cocaine on the cover talking! NOFX really set it off with the ripping "Hold It Back" and keep the heart racing for the duration of their side. The Spits are doing what The Spits do. Fucked up, creepy, awesomeness! I can't get enough Spits, *ever!* I think it's pretty great of Fat Mike to put this out, knowing that it would get a lot more people checking out The Spits who normally wouldn't listen to them. It's also pretty funny that there's a rolled up dollar bill next to The Spits' name and either a hundred or thousand dollar bill next to NOFX. —Ty Stranglehold (Fat)

NOFX: The Longest EP: CD

I love NOFX comps, like this and the 45 or 46 Songs b-sides album from

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a few years ago. This CD collects EP tracks and out-takes from throughout the length of NOFX's career, from 1987 (*The P.M.R.C. Can Suck on This*) all the way up to 2009's *Cokie the Clown*. With the exception of the really rough and kind of shitty *P.M.R.C.* EP and "S&M Airlines," most of this stuff is gold. NOFX seems pretty odd on the edit function, as most of their full length albums have at least a couple of real clunkers on them (cough, "Anarchy Camp," cough, "My Heart Is Yearning"), yet awesome stuff like "Jaw Knee Music" and "Glass War" end up as outtakes or b-sides. The strength of this CD is that Fat Mike didn't feel as obligated to fill up the run length of the separate shorter releases comprising this with baffling filler, so this actually is pretty tight. Cut off the last five tracks and you have one of the better NOFX releases. —Adrian (Fat)

NOFX: *The Longest EP: CD*

So it's come to this: I'm reviewing a NOFX album. For those of you who came in late (i.e., the last fifteen years or so), one of my first and most infamous columns for *MaximumRockNRoll* was a merry romp detailing my long-standing and permanent dislike for NOFX, from which I derived much of my early fortune. The deal, in so many words, was that I saw this band in 1986 when they were a three-piece ((famously standing up in the middle of their set, yelling "For THIS they took the Replacements off the P.A.???", then leaving the building)),

a few years later when they were a five-piece, and numerous times when they were their standard four-piece configuration. Three-piece, five-piece, four-piece, slam, I do not like them, Sam I Am ((hell, I barely like Samiam, come to think of it)). My contention is ((or, at least, was)) that they play a rather insipid style of what I used to call "generic hardcore" in the 80's ((later mutating into a slightly more sipid style of pop-punk in the 90's)) and now call "fake hardcore" in the 2000 AD's, with "funny once, if that" lyrics to which people always feel compelled to sing along — not out of any legit desire to sing along, mind you, but just to ensure that YOU, THE OTHER PERSON LISTENING, UNDERSTAND THE LYRICS and thereby BASK IN THEIR GLORIOUS ALLEGED MIRTH AND WIT. Their album covers were ugly and un-punk-looking, and, to me, they were pretty much the poster boys for punk rock moving out of the record stores and into the skateboard shops, and, boys, that don't *move* me. I'll explain this "fake hardcore" thing: Listen to a NOFX song. Tap your foot and count out the beats, like a music teacher would do it: "One...two...three...four..." ((with a band like NOFX, it's sometimes hard to figure out if you should be counting "one...two...three...four..." or "one-two-three-four, one-two-three-four" or "1234123412341234!" which is part, but not all, of the problem)). Make note of the counts at which the chords change. The vast, vast, VAST majority

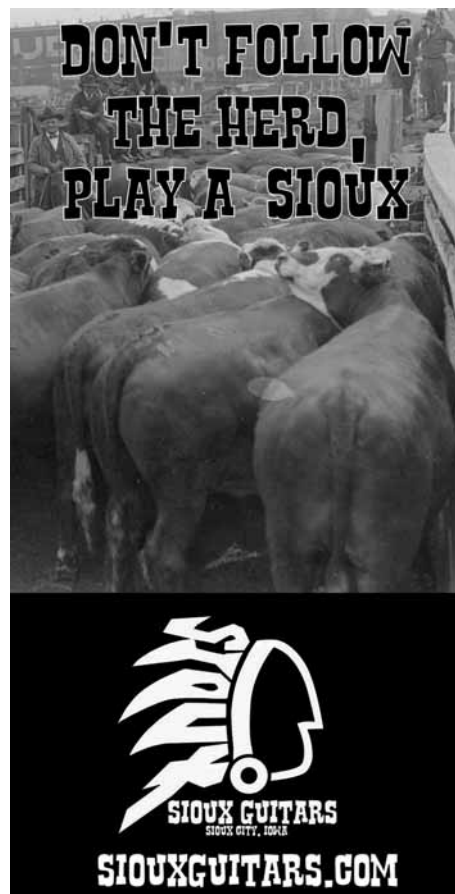
of the time, the chords change on "one." In other words, any given chord almost always plays for exactly four beats—or some exact multiple of four beats—before giving way to a new chord. Now, listen to a punk record that doesn't suck ((if you're a long-time NOFX fan, this may be a challenging proposition)). Tap your foot and count out the beats again. Where do the chords change? HINT: ALL OVER THE FUCKIN' PLACE. Four beats = one measure. It is SHIT BORING to listen to music where the chords only change at the beginnings of new measures. It's fuckin' garbage! Folk music has faster chord progressions than this! The ironic thing about this whole affair is that their acoustic numbers ("13 Stitches" "My Orphan Year") and joke reggae number ("Kill All The White Man") are actually pretty together. The punch line is that, in a lot of ways, NOFX don't actually suck. They're pretty good musicians, they are occasionally insightful and funny, and they are obviously dedicated to The Scene. They just suck at punk rock, the one thing at which we have reasonable grounds to expect them not to suck. That is all I have to say on the matter. How's the tour bus running? BEST SONG: "13 Stitches (Acoustic)" BEST SONG TITLE: "13 Stitches (Acoustic)" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Although I am straight and out of Green Bay, Wisconsin, I am not now nor have I ever been the titular punk guy in "Punk Guy." —Rev. Nørb (Fat)

NOMOS: *Notes from the Acheron: 12"*

I have yet to tire of listening to "The Fall." It starts off with a mid-tempo intro then rips open with some full-on thrash. So fuckin' good. Life affirming. Nomos, from Brooklyn, crank out some dark, noisy, and heavy hardcore. Comparisons have been made to bands like Poison Idea and Citizens Arrest. I sort of hear that, but those are lazy references. These guys are strong enough to stand on their own. If these guys are hip to the Swell Maps (as they cover "Vertical Slum"), then it's obvious they're not some typical band. The lyrics are opaque at times, but interesting nonetheless. It's as though you're sorting out a code. I like how they can deliver white-knuckled thrash, then switch over to something like "O'Fortuna," which slows things down temporarily at the start, then it's back to full-on, straight to the bottom of the deep end and the sound of facial bones crunching. Four records reviewed in this issue have reaffirmed/reignited my faith/love of hardcore. This is one of them. —M.Avg (Deranged)

NONE MORE BLACK: *Icons: CD*

Despite the band's pedigree and supergroup status of sorts, None More Black's third disc for Fat—*Icons*—is a mixed bag. Firstly, the disc just isn't a very fun listen. The songs don't seem to do more than simmer and bounce along without ever really kicking into gear. There are a few bright spots, like "I'm Warning You with Peace and Love" and the disc's closer, "Budapest Gambit" but, unfortunately, there are



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between—work with me here—(Young) Pioneers and Action Patrol. Frenetic, blistering, quick jabs that, were it a coin toss, consistently land on the ragged, scarred side of pop punk. Made up of a group of thoughtful, experienced thirty-somethings—check out the Rations interview this issue—that seem to be doing it for all the right reasons and having a blast at the same time. Beautiful packaging, careworn melodies, and a seventeen-minute running time. Recommended. —Keith Rosson (86'd)

RED DONS: *Fake Meets Failure*: LP

Lightning. Pure, white-hot, hot-streaking, sizzling, punk lightning. It's punk that people who've "given up," "don't get," or "moved on" from punk have the highest percentage of liking. It's just so obviously scorching, beautiful, and crackling music, regardless of genre. And I was reluctant to admit that lightning could strike twice. One of the driving forces behind Red Dons is Doug Burns, the lead singer and guitarist of the untouchable every-member-made-it-greater band, The Observers. The Red Dons first LP, *Death to Idealism*, while it had its bright spots, sounded covered in blankets, a little restricted and restrained, a little awkward, a little tentative. Getting used to new skin. Not so with *Fake Meets Failure*. The burka's ripped off, faces are revealed, and those faces are screaming. Analogous to the transformation of the Vicious to Masshysteri or Sexy to

Future Virgins, it took a little time from the dusk of one band to the dawn of another, but the newer band, exhibiting similar genetic code to its predecessor, has developed its own personality, its own habits, and has accomplished what many, including myself, didn't think was possible: release more music that stands shoulder-to-shoulder with some of their own legacy's finest work. One of the best punk records of 2010, hands down. —Todd (Deranged)

RED RED RED: *New Action*: CD

Big, loud, heavy, slightly spacey, and trippy jams that rest somewhere in the shared space of a Venn diagram that includes garage rock, punk rock, and psychedelia. A lot of the tunes are straight rippers, though the guitars throughout the record are often played as if being strangled, to show off some epically noisy, fuzzed-out, effects-laden six string pyrotechnics. The blown-out vocals tag along, while a bleating sax pokes its head around to counteract the trudging dirge-like bass notes. This is pretty solid stuff. —Jeff Proctor (Big Neck)

REFUSED:

Shape of Punk to Come: 2 x 12"

The original pressing of this album was hindered by the then limited budget of Burning Heart Records and was released on a single LP. The record was far too long to properly fit on one record, and the result was a thin mastering job and a subpar sound. It wouldn't have mattered if it hadn't been one of the most fully realized hardcore punk records to have

come out (ever). Epitaph reissued the LP a few months ago on a bigger budget, but again as a single disc. This is the most recent reissue, and finally sees the record cut across two 12" records, allowing the grooves room to sink and the signal to come out without any hint of distortion. It sounds great. I've bought this album at least times since its original release and don't regret picking it up yet again this time around. This is at least as essential to a hardcore record collection as *Damaged* or *Age of Quarrel*. If you read this whole review not knowing what I'm talking about because you've never heard this, do yourself a favor and pick it up. —Ian Wise (Epitaph)

RIVERDALES: *Tarantula*: CD

By now you probably know the Riverdales deal: Weasel and Vapid paying homage to the Ramones with clean note down strokes on the guitars, snotty vocals, drums like a metronome, and all the rest. While probably not exactly essential listening, it sounds just like a Riverdales album should and leagues better than the sea of imitators. —Jeff Proctor (Recess)

RIVERDALES: *Tarantula*: LP

It's like they wanted to sound like the Ramones if the Ramones were totally boring. I've heard way better takes on the Ramones. —Vincent (Recess)

ROUGH KIDS: *Into the '00s*: 7"

Hell yes. Killer minor key punk rock that immediately brings to mind some of my recent (sorta) faves like Hex

Dispensers, Idle Hands, No Hope For The Kids, etc. A lyric sheet would've been swell, because it usually goes one of two ways with bands of this persuasion: angry-smart or faux-spooky. I'm certainly hoping it's the former more than the latter. Regardless, great record. —Dave Williams (Margin Mouth/ Rough, <http://thisisrough.com>)

SCOUTS HONOR: *Buried*: CD

Final release from this Chicago-by-way-of-Peoria band. Singer/guitarist Jared Grabb kept this group together, mostly as a three piece, since 2002. It's heavy rock with thick-as-molasses guitar riffs, chunky bass, and plodding drums. "Vultures" and "Arise" finds Grabb baring raw emotions for all to see with a jarring effect. "Sweating through Our Days" is about drinking—a lot. The record ends with "Punk Ltd.," which could almost be the band's anthem. The one misstep on the CD is the thirty-minute bonus track, which is the same chord played over and over again. Lame. But there is an in-depth DVD included with this package. It details the band's history and numerous line-up changes. There are some good extras here as well. The band's German tour of 2008 is documented by the band playing in abandoned subway stations and bomb shelters, which looked pretty tight. Don't be eating food while watching "Jose's Story" however. I almost threw up a little in my mouth. Thanks, dudes! —Sean Koenpnick (Thinker Thought)



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SECOND STORY MAN:

Screaming Trees: CD

Noise pop for the most part, with fuzzed-out production, catchy hooks here and there, and enough restraint and bite to keep it from falling into either the "too sugary" or "too abrasive" camps. —Jimmy Alvarado (Noise Pollution)

SEX PRISONER: Self-titled: EP

The power violence revival continues. Sex Prisoner, from Arizona, sound a lot like Crossed Out mixed with some Infest. Musically, they deliver. The sound is heavy, abrasive, and definitely rife with anger. They rarely venture into full-on thrash, which is a plus. Instead, you're bludgeoned with some heavy riffs and a vocalist who spits the words out in a throaty, dry rasp. The lyrics, however, tend to get ridiculous and one dimensional. A lot of "beat down" posturing going on with threats of breaking one's ankles ("Lethargy"), shitting on someone's clothes ("Vanity"), the really confusing "Piss When I Cum," which starts off ranting about "crackheads," then the singer declaring he can't be broken, he's a "motherfucking machine," then ranting about people begging change for dope. The list goes on. Makes me wonder if whoever writes the lyrics is in a fucked living situation, so they're just lashing out, or are they a paranoid right winger? Musically, I'd recommend this. Lyrically, it's a cringe fest. As a friend once said about bands like Tragedy and From Ashes Rise, "The music is great,

as long as you ignore the lyrics!" You can apply that here as well. —M.Avrq (To Live A Lie)

SLIT PLASTERS, THE:

It Smells Like Hell over Here: 7" EP

Sounds a lot more ROCK than one would rightly imagine a band called "The Slit Plasters" to sound; then again, having rarely had occasion to, in fact, imagine what a band called "The Slit Plasters" might, in fact, sound like, this statement is high conjecture on my part and perhaps taken best with a grain of slit. A-side sounds like perhaps The Cult, after having been smacked on the head rather soundly by a floor safe containing the early 2000's; the two songs on the flip sound more like the early 2000's, after having been smacked in the head rather soundly by a floor safe containing The Cult. The brain damage is only there to keep it the right length. I'm on board with the saxophone; hit it in the head with a safe containing something of topical interest and let's take this party off campus. BEST SONG: "Wayne Svitato Integro." BEST SONG TITLE: "Hildegard, 5 Vice Commando SHE-WOLF." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Band members include Sayid 1, Senor 2, Mister 3z, Herr 4 and Signore 5; guest musicians include Monsieur 6, Pan 7, Bay 8, and Monsieur 9. Ben 10 was apparently unavailable due to contractual stipulations. Also, one of the cartoon guys on the cover has the flag of Algeria on his sleeve. —Rev. Nørb (Chorizoloco)

SMALL BONES: Self-titled: CD

Ah, I could almost taste the cheap beer and cigarettes at a show in some DIY punk house down south when this CD started playing. Small Bones are a relatively new band from New Orleans and this is their first release on Plan-It-X. They play this super fast punk rock with a little melody thrown in here and there. They sounds a lot like a sped-up version of This Is My Fist!, and I'm not just saying that because the singer is a girl. Small Bones doesn't sound like any of the other bands that are on the same label as them, which is sad because I usually like the quirky acts that Plan-It-X puts out. The best song on here is "Cold War Storage," which starts out with a forty-five second sing along with no instruments, and it sounds good because they're not rushing through it at full speed. This CD is a decent first effort, but maybe before their next release, they need to sit down as a band and meditate on what they want to do next to make themselves stand out. —Lauren Trout (Plan-It-X)

SMOKE OR FIRE: The Speakeasy: CD

The Speakeasy builds on the strengths of Smoke or Fire's previous full length *The Sinking Ship* and tops it by adding the little extra pop that was missing before. The catchy, political discontent starts right away from the lead off track "Integrity" and holds sway with its melodic punk all the way to the closer "Utah." Actually, there's one stumble and that's the acoustic track "Honey

I Was Right about the War." While I understand the song's sentiment of "I told you so," it comes off mostly as arrogant. If I was dating the dude, I don't think I would be changing my politics so much as punching him in the nuts. That aside, the rest of the album really is aces. —Adrian (Fat)

SO COW: Meaningless Friendly: LP

I got the mail-order version of this record as soon as I saw that it was available, which differs from this version I got for review by adding a bonus 7". I got it based on the strength of the first LP on Tic Tac Totally, a collection of some of the one-man band from Ireland's output. The first time I heard So Cow's punky, happy-yet-melancholy, jangly rock'n'roll songs, I immediately swooned. *Meaningless* is more of a continuation than a progression, but it is a slight progression. The songs seem more centered and focused with less variation, which isn't terribly surprising given that the previous LP was a collection of sorts. Lyrically, So Cow centers on common disappointments that seem unavoidable as one grows older with youthful hopes diminishing and adult fears growing larger. This LP is a damn fine follow up, and I recommend it just as much as the rest of the So Cow catalog. As I said above, I purchased the mail-order edition with the bonus three-song 7". I wouldn't mention it, but the A-side, "Ain't No Fun," should have been a proper album track. It's

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definitely one of my favorite So Cow tracks. Midheaven is handling TTT's mail-order now, so I'd get over to their site ASAP to grab the LP + 7" (as well as any other So Cow you ain't got your grubby paws on yet). —Vincent (Tic Tac Totally)

STATE LOTTERY, THE: When the Night Comes: LP

When the Night Comes isn't necessarily a departure for The State Lottery. And I can't imagine any fans of their previous full-length, *Cities We're Not From*, being bummed at how it sounds. It's not a departure, but there's a definite shift at work here. Call it a slight "stylistic advancement," or a "band maturing," or whatever you want. The point being, it's entirely effective. While *Cities...* was rich with a kind of wandering solemnity, *When the Night Comes* is firmly entrenched in rock and roll and the kind of detail-rich lyricism that dudes like Springsteen and Josh Ritter do so well with. While the band still manages to pen songs that sound like a Detroit winter come to life, this time around it's filtered through the wire mesh of rock and roll, JD Salinger's short stories, healthy doses of saxophone and organ, and even a hint here and there of '60s pop. I'm surprised they pulled it off, and more surprised that they make it sound so damn effortless. Bobby Colombo's vocals still fall between Blake Schwarzenbach and Brendan Kelly, but his ability to tell a story has improved massively since the last record. *When the Night Comes* has its joyous,

thundering gems ("Coming Alive" and "East Jordan") and its heart-stung lamentations ("Little Song" and the album closer, "Spring, 2008, Detroit"). It's what I wish people thought "indie rock" was when they used that term, and it's probably one of the best records that came out in 2010. You can get the LP version from Salinas, or a free download of it at ifyoumakeit.com. I'd suggest you do both—the art is beautiful and the lyrics are more than worth reading. This is an awesome band and a terrific LP. —Keith Rosson (Salinas)

STICKS AND STONES: Nineteen Eighty Seven: 12" EP

I was like "ooh, keen, an album by that bubblegum band from Milwaukee!" Turns out it's actually a hardcore band from New Jersey, recorded ("in the spring of our youths") in—you guessed it—1987. I dunno. Not to be a heathen unbeliever/cranky jaded one or anything, but 1987 was a pretty shit year for hardcore. In point of fact, so was 1986, and, in large part, 1985. Even 1983 and 1984 were only really interesting if you were living in some tertiary market whose homegrown HC scene took off a few years after the national hotspots. By 1986 ((at the VERY latest)), pretty much all the good was gone from hardcore; people just kept playing some variant of it because they really had no idea what else to do. Or thus are my findings. To support said findings, I point to the fruity and musicianly intros to the songs "Contempt" and "Society's Pressure."

From about 1984 on out, just about every hardcore band had some songs that had extended musician-y intro parts like these, which I claim stems from an either subconscious or intentionally repressed desire to play fruity musician-y music instead of hardcore. By 1987, people were completely bored with hardcore, but they were playing it anyway—that's my point here. I've always viewed 1987 as the big pop-punk year, myself—there were the Hard-Ons and the first Lemonheads album and White Flag and 7 Seconds "New Wind" and the Descendents and the Oysters and a whole gob of shit I'm sure I'm forgetting—and whatever hardcore was in 1987, with the long songs and the fruity guitary intros and the no sense of humor, was just, like, dross to me. I don't even know what "dross" is, but that's what it was. Twenty-three years later, when none of this matters a pinch of shit, I still can't completely divorce myself from the notion that these guys are just a bunch of kids who were late for the party and therefore don't quite "get" it, which is fairly unfair, but such is life. In any event, this era of hardcore holds little to no interest for me, although this is well-played and fairly well-recorded ((if you discount the unlistenable triggered snare sound, which was a popular—God knows why—snare drum recording method for a few years starting around 1986)), and seems like the kind of thing that should have grabbed a bigger chunk o' market share Back In The Day. I conclude by saying

that the fact that forty-five-year-olds are still shaking their fists at forty-year-olds and telling them they don't know shit about hardcore is a beautiful thing indeed. Thanks for the memories. BEST SONG: "Thanks For The Cash." BEST SONG TITLE: "Contempt" i guess? FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Record is a single-sided 12", with an etched b-side depicting, somewhat incongruously, one of those '50s styled microphones. —Rev. Nørb (Gunner)

STONED AT HEART: Party Tracks Vol. 1: LP

One of the curious wrinkles of surrounding yourself with fellow music lovers—roommates, good buddies, significant others—is that when someone moves out or moves away, you come to realize that you don't own some of your favorite music. And it happens with bands that you're most familiar with, collectively. I was astonished at how few Big Boys, Bad Brains, and Bananas records I actually owned when I ended up living by myself. The bands seem so close. I listened to them so much. And there were gaping holes in my music library. And so it can go with local, great bands. "Oh, man, I'll pick that up next time. I see you all the time." It's especially the case when so many of the members were and are in other bands like Toys That Kill, Can Of Beans, and Underground Railroad To Candyland. I'm totally guilty of this behavior. I don't want to say that



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I take Stoned At Heart for granted, I don't. But I really thought I'd actually reviewed this record and hadn't. I first met Baby J., the lady voice in Stoned At Heart, as a sixteen-year-old-kid who was living in a shed behind a house in San Pedro. She's been playing in bands ever since. Couple her voice to the sunny-on-top, questioning-in-the-middle, it goes-down-easy playing and singing of Todd Congelliere, Chachi, and Jimmy Trash, and you've got a record that's super-duper familiar and comfortable, but traveling down another alley, off on a different errand. To those who don't recognize a single person's name in this review, think of indie rock made by punk rockers, so all the douchey, bourgeoisie preciousness is kicked to the curb, yet it's pretty and mostly mellow, precisely played, emotionally convincing, and always moving forward. —Todd (Recess)

STOP BREATHING: Self-titled: 7"

When I got to the second song on this record, "Bombs Away," I groaned. Oh great, I thought, another hardcore song about the world being blown to pieces. Then I realized something kind of scary: Even though punks have been singing about this shit for decades now, it's still valid. I was on a flight recently with an air force guy who told me about how secure I should feel because of all the missiles the U.S. has ready to go, but it didn't make me feel secure at all. It didn't help that the guy was kind of an idiot, even though he assured me he wasn't going to be

the one pushing the button. I guess my point is no matter how samey shit like this starts to feel, it's probably not a bad idea to keep talking about how fucked up the world is, and it sure doesn't hurt to package that talk in the form of some cool hardcore. —MP Johnson (Rotten To The Core)

SUNSHINE SS: *Throw My Brain against the Wall: 7"*

The opening track on this record is called "Peace, Love, and Sunshine SS" and is one of the most legitimately dirty hardcore songs I have heard in a long time. Early Black Flag or Circle Jerks are a great reference point. The guitar riffs sound borrowed from the early '80s, relying a lot on muted notes and quick shuffles in the chord progression. The band is able to inject more into their sound than sheer enthusiasm, though. The mid-tempo "Permanent Vacation" is deceptively clever, throwing in inverted chord structures with ease and a pleasant disregard for the listener. The production is warm with the right amount of grit between the groove and needle, if you know what I mean. This is top notch throwback style hardcore that would appeal the scummy sects of people ordering from the Grave Mistake catalog. —Ian Wise (Death, Agonies, And Screams)

SWANN DANGER: *Staccato: EP*

Post punk with a goth edge, similar to early Siouxsie And The Banshees. The music is dark with a tribal beat and an ominous sounding bass guitar. "A

Minor Heartbreak" is my favorite of the three on here. It's a bit more driving and the washes of noise only add to the subterranean atmosphere. I also really like how the bass sounds during the main verses. Sounds like there's a guitar in there as well, though it's used sparingly. This is some really, really good stuff and has certainly helped shake me out of a negative stupor towards the present state of music. These guys would fit perfectly on a bill with Magick Daggers and the Secret Society Of The Sonic Six. Someone get on that, and make it happen here in Los Angeles, please. —M.Avr (Mess Me Up)

TESTORS: *Two Sides of Death: 7"*

Hmmm... I like this, but if you're curious about the Testors, then check out the album on Swami first, since it offers studio recordings. What's on here are two live recordings (from 1978) that have a murky sound quality. It's not horrible, but it doesn't have the same blazing fire as the studio recordings. This stuff is pretty raw, and some of the low end is lost in the process. That said, the songs that are on here are pretty damn good. The previously unreleased "Drac" recounts the dilemma of being the Prince of Darkness and being on the run. The farfisa pushes this song over the edge and gives it the creature feature atmosphere. It's definitely my favorite of the record. The B side is "It's Only Death" and the version on here is exclusive to this release. The urgency is intact and may be more so due to this being a live performance. Plus the lyrics

to this song, fuggin' primo stuff—"You see I'm losing my heart, I'm losing my soul, I gotta keep the damn thing under control/ But I need a cigarette because I cancelled my mind". Whoa! And, yep, the comparisons to the Dead Boys are accurate, but there's a little more bluesy Heartbreakers style in there as well. Only 1,000 of these records are on the face of the planet. —M.Avr (Windian)

TILTWHEEL: *The High Hate Us: LP*

I'm a man of glacial movement. I'm a marathon runner of creativity and productivity. My love of Tiltwheel is well documented because I self-publish. I re-tell Davey's clown stories in front of kids when I talk at the library. I once made a decision to stop dating a lady because she didn't appreciate that "back stage" for Tiltwheel means "van." The mini-novel-length, three-part interview of Tiltwheel that was printed in *Razorcake* a good year before this record was released is the longest piece of "music journalism" (such a twatty term) I've ever done. It was worth every word and I really still don't care if more than a hundred people read it in its entirety. I did it because I could and I wanted to and I didn't have a boss yanking my chain. If you're reading this and vehemently disagree with how high a regard I've kept and still keep for Tiltwheel, do us both a favor and put all that energy in making something of your own. Do it for fifteen years—through snapped bones, shanghaied hearts, rejected paperwork, douche bosses, termite



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swarms—then get back to me if you're not selling insurance or haven't completely disappeared into "real life." I'm glad to say that *The High Hate Us* didn't jump the shark—that it's on par with the best of Tiltwheel—because I can't afford to get these tattoos lasered off and I don't know how one goes about recalling patron saints. Beautiful packaging, to boot. —Todd (ADD)

TIMEBOMBS: *Mumbling*: 10"

Whoah-ho-ho! This is so fucking ugly! Noisy and blown-out sonic nihilism. Mix Void with Drunks With Guns and you get something similar to this. I have nothing but respect for a band like Timebombs, who instead of playing it safe and growing boring, have decided to step away from a more acceptable sound, and actually become more "hardcore" than most hardcore bands out there. That might sound like a large statement to lay on some band, but, really, hardcore was never about playing it safe, taking it easy, and playing favorites to a crowd. That sort of behavior is for pussies. If you want a band that does that, then look up your local Heartbreakers or Stooges clone bands. On this 10" they go further out than they did on their recent LP. The sound is darker, noisier, more unpleasant, and so fucked up. Even the lyrics are as nihilistic and twisted with lines like, "I've prayed for the day I slit your throat," "I need more dead, I need more slaughtered, I need to be dead," and "Pitch black are the eyes that I see." Yep... Can't wait to catch these guys live in a couple weeks. —M.Avrq (Cowabunga)

TOO MANY DAVES: *Weekend at Dave's*: CD

The first time I met Davey Tiltwheel was in Vegas. We were neighbors at the amazing Nevada Palace hotel. In a (totally uncharacteristic... yeah right) bout of drunkenness, I foisted a Hoosegow beer cozie on him and he returned the favor with a Too Many Daves one. I was struck by the band's code. Beer, weed, pizza... I'm no Dave, but those are cornerstones in life. I was hooked. Many years later, I'm still listening to the Daves. They still play songs that feel like they're taken right out of my life. Seriously, I've been eying up a hot dog spinner for a loooooong time. I can't get enough of the disc. Fun songs about... Beer, weed, pizza, dudes... It doesn't get much better than that. Also, this disc supplies us with an answer to the age old question: How can you improve on Body Count's "Cop Killer"? You get some kids to chant "FUCK THE POLICE" in the breakdown, that's how! Shirts off, Dudes on! —Ty Stranglehold (ADD)

TRANZMITORS, THE: *"Get Around" b/w "It's Not Your Call": 7"*

I can't possibly think of something to say about this band that hasn't been said before. They absolutely kill at Undertones style power pop. I saw them play for the first time a while back and couldn't believe how tight they were. The harmonies, the leads, they pull it all off live, too. When they first started trickling 7"s across the

Canadian border every couple weeks, I felt they were kinda overrated. Now, I think they're probably one of the absolute best power pop bands around. —Daryl (Dirtnap)

TRANZMITORS: *"Sunday Morning" b/w "Jimmy's at the Mod Shop": 7"*

If Elvis Costello was dead, his boner'd go through the coffin at the deliciousness of how the Tranzmitors improved on some of his tastiest musical ideas; distilling and reducing the recipes to pure, powerful sugar-coated punches. Paul Weller's not dead, but he's got a massive boner for the Tranzmitors, too. Scale up that small monkey bar of boners and you too can climb up to get an unfettered gaze upon a small constellation of power pop perfection. I'm no lawyer, but I advise you to get any and all Tranzmitors. They're the reason the northern lights are so bright. —Todd (Meaty Beaty / No Front Teeth)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Ain't No Shame Volume 1*: CD

Ultimately, there are two types of compilations. The sales pitch (here's what our label has to offer), and the much more broad "I've got an idea." This is the later; with a collection of bands that have all played the same stage in the outside patio of a Mexican restaurant in Gainesville (if nothing, I know I've seen Stoned At Heart there before). While it seems like a pretty budget operation (everything's hand-done, and I realized the labels are reversed) it only adds to the charm

to this collection of mostly Florida/Southern area bands. Plus it's a benefit record. Track down a copy and put it on at your next party. —Joe Evans III (Boca Fiesta)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Crustacean Records 2010 Sampler*: CD

I'm usually a little late to the party, so I am quite happy to report that this nifty little sampler just turned me onto four of my new favorite bands. The disc is stuffed with a nice cross selection of the label's output including the Soviettes, Awesome Snakes, and Fuck Knights. But far and away, the tracks by Droids Attack, the Gusto, Drunk Drivers, and the Giraffes blew me away the most. This sampler single-handedly sent me scurrying to Amoeba over the weekend looking for the above-mentioned bands material. You really can't ask more from a label sampler than that, can you? —Garrett Barnwell (Crustacean)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Daddy Rockin' Strong*: LP

Subtitled "A Tribute to Nolan Strong and the Diablos," this cover comp is pretty damn spectacular. Nolan Strong had a beautiful, high voice that epitomized '50s soulful sound, with great harmonies from the four-man Diablos, and solid backup band with tight rhythm pounding out the sonic sounds. In order to live up to that high standard, The Wind Records teams with dependable Norton Records to get a killer group of contemporaries: Mark Sultan, Dirtbombs, Dan Kroha, Reigning Sound, even Andre Williams

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**VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Punx Don't Drink: 7"**

Always a fan of making overwhelmingly untrue statements, I was totally stoked when I saw this four way split. Cold Shoulder (Indiana), Coke Bust, Poison Planet, and Boiling Over each contribute two totally pissed-off ragers. I've always welcomed straight-edge, not necessarily as a personal ideal, but as an important part of punk rock. So if this record "embodies the new face and attitude of Straight Edge" (from the liner notes) I say kudos, these bands are passionate and intense and they don't just sing about generic, backstabbing bullshit. But we all have our own battles which we have to fight in our own ways. And some punx drink. —Daryl (Third Party)

**VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Quincy Punx WM3: 7"**

How can this not be a win/win situation? Some great bands covering songs by another great band for a great cause. Woooo! I've been a fan of Quincy Punx for a long time. We've got three songs

from an upcoming tribute album and a fourth track exclusive to this record. All four bands are great (P.O.S., Off With Their Heads, 20 Dollar Love, and Torch The Spires) with their respective songs, but it's Torch The Spires that come out on top for me, mainly because "Tina" is my favorite Quincy Punx song. One hundred percent of the profits from this record go to the defense benefit for the West Memphis Three. Something I can definitely get behind. Great work, folks! —Ty Stranglehold (Crustacean)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Revelation 150: Past Present: Breaking out the Classics: CD

Heres's a new compilation where the long-running hardcore label celebrates their history with new and old bands covering material from across the label's history. I dug the Bold stuff when they tackled Supertouch's "Searchin' for the Light" and also when other bands threw out Bold songs. So I guess I may need to get me some Bold, eh? Mikoto's take on Texas Is The Reason's "Back and to the Left" was also a standout. And, of course, Walter Schreifels's contribution doesn't disappoint because, uh, it's Walter! The rest of the songs all had a sameness to them that was hard for me to overcome. But fans of this label's bands will have a field day with this record. —Sean Koeppenick (Revelation)

**VOLT PER OCTAVES, THE:
Via Human Error: CD**

By the looks of the cover art and the lyrics of one of the tunes, it appears this group is a family affair with a few

special guests, including Parliament/Funkadelic's Bernie Worrell joining in the fun. What you get here is mostly instrumental synth stuff that's often spacey and occasionally funky. Was intrigued enough by one of the instruments utilized, the Korg DS-10, to look in to see what it was. Turns out it's a full-blown synthesizer application you can get for the Nintendo DS game that offers the potential for making some interesting noise, and it appears these folk are making good use of it. Fuggin' technology, man. —Jimmy Alvarado (The Volt Per Octaves)

WE ARE HEX: Kill the Goer: CDEP

There used to be a time where I placed a curse upon the words post punk. It always kind of annoyed me how anything could be post—"thing that never stopped existing." I mean, Iggy Pop was considered proto-punk until 1977 at which point he was considered post-punk. How the hell does that work? Eventually I learned of the ways of Gang Of Four and Wire and I stopped being so bitchy about the semantics of it all. We Are Hex continue in that line of post punk with the production values to match. Their songwriting skills are not too shabby either. —Bryan Static (Roaring Colonel)

WHEELS ON FIRE: Liar, Liar: CD

This is some of the catchiest, peppiest, poppiest garage rock that's ever come across these ears. Sweet and soulful chords ring out while organ swirls and tambourine, glockenspiel, and horns

make cameos at this reverb-drenched sock hop. Exploding Hearts meets Tommy James And The Shondells. The Real Kids and Flamin' Groovies split a bill, sharing a van and some beers with The Swinging Medallions and Question Mark and the Mysterians. That's what you get here. All of it is absolutely delightful and a joy to listen to. —Jeff Proctor (Alien Snatch)

WHISKEY & CO.: Rust Colors: LP

If one doesn't know Whiskey & Co.'s heritage, doesn't read any of the lyrics, doesn't pick up on a single clue, that dummy could say, "Man, I hate country. Why're you wasting time on this? My mohawk's droopin' over here." Let me lay down a basic fact. DIY punk in the 2010's is what punk's been promising for decades: a lifelong lifestyle. (Not a clothes-style or hairstyle or a simply purchasable-as-a-jumpsuit commodity.) And I relish the fact that dyed-in-the-wool, not-getting-younger punks are fully embracing other traditional musical forms without discarding their ideals or the essence of rebellion, fun, broken hearts, and questioning. And Whiskey & Co.'s no awkward or embarrassing hybrid country-punk (or cowpunk), stapling loud guitar sounds onto everything. If Waffle House America wasn't Wal-Mart glassy-eyed for ball-draggin' obesity-inducing pop country, Kim Helm and the boys'd be on jukeboxes next to Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, and the Pine Hill Haints from shore to shining

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shore. They ain't, and that's partially why I'm continuing to celebrate them on this end. —Todd (No Idea)

WHITE NIGHT: Self-titled: 10"

Dysfunctional and productive: the two most activated features of White Night/Small Pool. They may lose their singer in a drunken maelstrom of events, but hey, they still set up the show and got people to show up. Anyways, he was hungry. I'm never too sure about their discography or lineup, but whenever they play or I come across a new record, it's always great. They started with a formula and have steadily been distorting it with their own bizarreness to a point where it's pretty fucking original and still possesses everything that was once awesome about it. So why care about what Screeching Weasel "classic" is being remastered this month, when you can care about what living room White Night is tearing up? —Daryl (No Breaks)

WILD, THE: Set Ourselves Free: CD

This band is pretty great. It's catchy, emotional, full band folk-punk that avoids the pitfall a lot of other folksy bands fall into of just being annoying. In fact, they remind me of another favorite folk punk band of mine, Rosa, but with access to better recording equipment. It wouldn't be quite right to say the record was unabashedly optimistic (there is a song called "The Saddest Thing I Ever Saw" after all), but it contains a definite innate joyousness that reflects in the music. For instance, "Dear Noah" has a driving soul element to it due to the organ

that supplements the banjo and acoustic guitar, and "Breathe City Lights" train-like rhythm would befit a '60s country song about riding the rails. An interesting sidenote is that the album was recorded and produced by Joe Queer and Jeff Rosenstock of Bomb the Music Industry! I never would of thought of either of those two as candidates to produce a largely bluegrass and Americana-informed punk band, but the results are pretty good. I highly recommend this. —Adrian (Asian Man and Quote Unquote)

WRECK OF THE ZEPHYR: Self-titled: 7"

Starts out with some crazy guitar picking then barrels into some bouncy-ass shit. This band always makes me want to dance and shout. Very, very tight musicianship on this. These guys take every step in the right direction, completely synchronized. When I first put this on my record player, I was nervous it wouldn't sound as great as it does live, but somehow it does. The energy of the music and the earnestness of the lyrics just floor me. "Through and Through" is a seriously beautiful song about, well... buy this and find out for yourself. Only one hundred copies made. The paper is handmade, and everything on said paper is hand written. Is that DIY enough for you, huh? Is it? —Rene Navarro (Pass The Fist)

X: Under the Big Black Sun: LP

Beautifully re-issued by Porterhouse, this album is a god damn classic. Not without its duds, but a classic nonetheless. X has a pretty extensive catalog, some of it great, some of it of questionable quality.

In my eyes, this is one of those albums that's a little of both worlds. When it's good, it's unfathomable. Who were these people? What universe did they live in? What bus line takes me there? Beautiful, tragic, truly poetic, and full of character. Not timeless, but close, and definitely not trapped by the tropes of 1982. That's when it's good, when it's bad, it's pretty pathetic, and they really are wearing way too much make up. But it's easy to take cheap shots at X, so call off your dogs and pick up this record if you haven't already, because Bonebrake may be playing the marimba, but it's still punk as fuck. —Daryl (Porterhouse)

YOUNG GOVERNOR: "Call Me When the Cat Dies" b/w "Fade Away": 7"

Hey man, someone slipped the Guv the Ryan Rousseau broken digital, sand-scratched, blood-trickling-down-forehead melodies handbook, and I'm not complaining. I loves me some Tokyo Electron, Digital Leather, Destruction Unit, and the Reatards. And this follows suit. It's like seeing a transparency on the overhead over the Guv's formidable power pop diagram. This release is skuzzier, more fractured, somehow Teutonic, and just as excellent. I liked the trick that that Guv's pony was pulling before. I like him more now that I hear his pony's got more than just one trick. If you have to decide between paying off a medical bill or buying this 7", I'd go with the 7" because it'll definitely make you feel better... but that's just me. I'm no health care professional. —Todd (Criminal IQ)

YOUR PEST BAND / DEFECT DEFECT / GROANING GROOVE:

Puke and Destroy: Split: 7"


Three bands—two Japanese, one American—each with two songs apiece. Your Pest Band: Landing somewhere between The Urchin and the Raydios; a proficient Japanese punk band. Thankfully, they're not sterile, but they're also not as memorable as the two signposts I just mentioned. By far, my favorite tracks are by Defect Defect, and although the delivery's convincing and I like the song, the phrase "Fuck God Lets Punk" is pretty cheesy. Groaning Groove sounds like a grunge band attempting metal, featuring the voice of an angry, lesser-known Muppet. Not my bag. I have total respect for Snuffy Smiles, but this 7" delivered mixed results. —Todd (Snuffy Smiles)

ZOMBIE DOGS: Self-titled: LP

All female feminist skatecore on an awesome new female-run label? Please give me more bands like this. Infectiously catchy riffs, intelligent and witty lyrics, and dynamic vocals make for an album that you want to sing along with to every song. The tracks "Braincrush," "Thrashin'," and "Nerd in the Pit," alone are worth the price of admission, and there are eight other tracks on this album to rock out to. Get this one before it's sold out. —Paul J. Comeau (Strength In Numbers, strengthin123.com)

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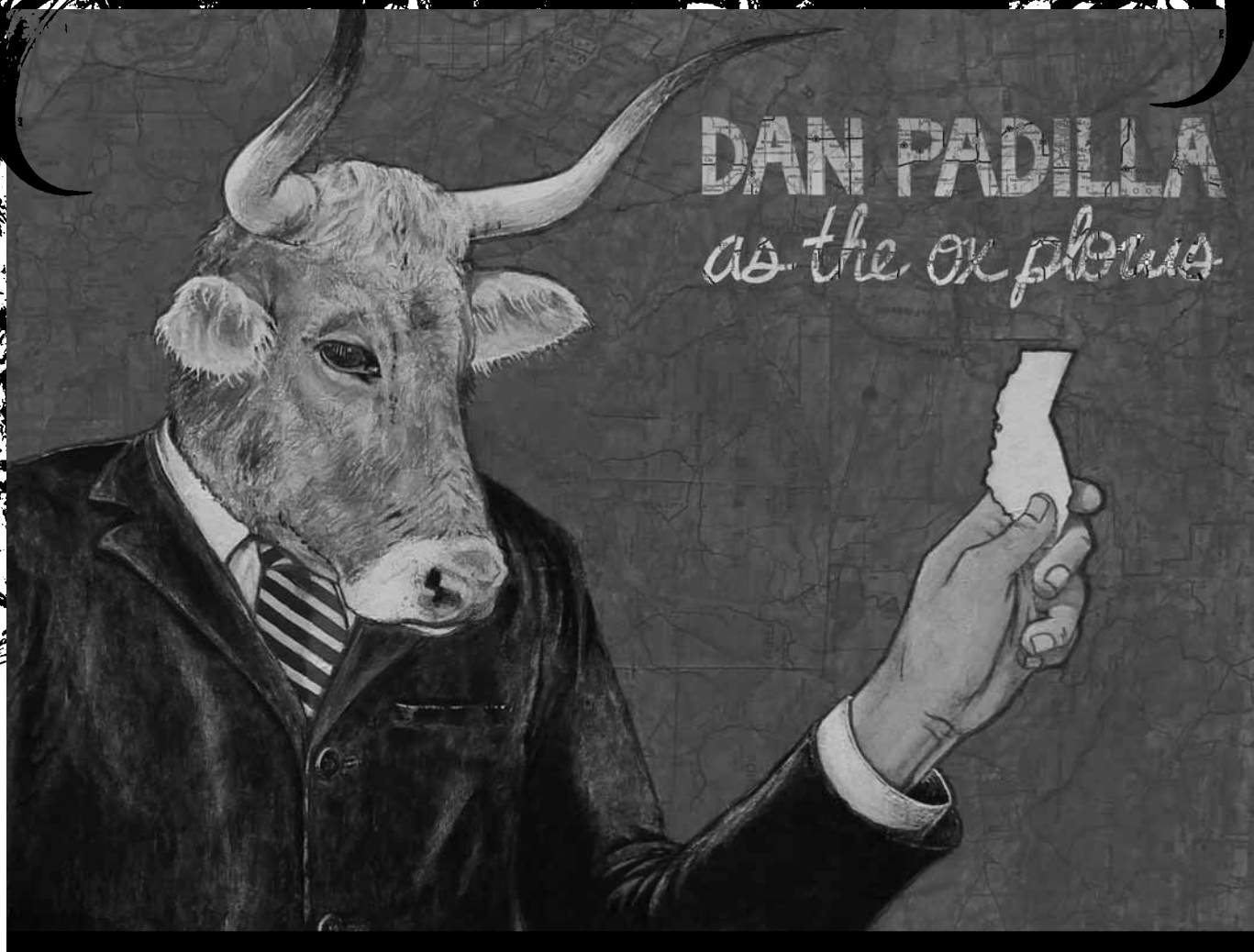
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LET'S FACE IT. If you're over thirty, have moved out of your parents' house, and come to realize that "anarchy!" means no bridges, public libraries, streets, or fire departments, idealism's a much harder pill to swallow; especially when you're looking at it through possible liver damage.

BUT THE DUDES IN DAN PADILLA HAVE FOUGHT HARD to remain ethical, moral, and honest well after more vocal members of the DIY punk community have "moved on" to the comfort and status quo they once claimed to despise and swore they'd "burn to the ground." Dan Padilla just wants some public space and the freedom to play what they've created... and the cops can still go fuck themselves.

DOWNLOAD THE ENTIRE FULL-LENGTH RECORD with high-quality wav files and complete cover art, FOR FREE ON RAZORCAKE.ORG. The physical LPs are being worked on as you read this if they're not out already.

A split release



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RADIOACTIVE SAN ONOFRE: JESS “THE MESS”

1978-2010

Jesse Rich aka Jess “The Mess,” the lead singer/guitarist for San Juan Capistrano’s Broken Bottles, passed away on Wednesday Dec. 8. I did not know Jess, but I definitely knew his music. In other words, I think I knew him pretty well.

I first started listening to Southern California punk rock in 1981. My hometown of Concord, North Carolina was a long way from Southern California, so I found out about the scene mostly by reading about it. I had been tipped off by *The Tomorrow Show*’s ridiculous story in 1980 on the new breed of “violent punk rock” and I jotted down the band names that the show’s moronic guest show mentioned for further research. Before long, I was fully entranced by the likes of The Adolescents, Agent Orange, TSOL, Black Flag, and Social Distortion. I couldn’t believe that some of the best music I had ever heard was coming out of this one area and being made by people about my age.

Over the next three years I bought as many American hardcore punk rock records as I could afford. I always thought of Southern California bands as the heart that pumped blood out to the rest of the hardcore punk body across the country. But by late 1984 the creativity of the scene had been displaced by way too many bands playing what sounded like generic thrash to my ears. As a result, I drifted away from the scene. My attendance at shows and purchases of new punk rock records dropped off to just a trickle.

That change held sway until 1996 when I wound up diving back into the scene full-force. I recall hearing a U.S. Bombs album playing in a local record store and thinking that my favorite style of punk rock must be in vogue again. After seeing a young, but old-school sounding, local band playing a show with tons of kids crowding onto the stage to sing with them, I knew that I had to go back to my true musical love. If I were worried about fitting in with my own age group, I never would have made that decision. Since I wasn’t remotely concerned about fitting in, I could give myself over to the music and the scene without any nagging self doubt. Another bonus is that I have since gotten to hear even more of the best music I have ever heard. This time around it was from people younger than me, which brings me back to Jess and Broken Bottles.

I first heard Broken Bottles on the Hostage Records comp *Cuts Volume 1* in 2002. Their song “Gothic Chicks” was pure pleasure. The music was simple and slower than most modern punk rock. It reminded me of early Social Distortion. The melodic guitar lines and Jess’s voice were the dominant signposts. Jess possessed one of the most unique voices I’ve ever heard. He was nasal but never whiny and managed to convincingly pull off anything from a menacing snarl to exhausted desperation, sometimes all within the same song. The lyrical style made me think of Chuck Berry, the first great lyric writer in rock’n’roll in my opinion, with Jess-penned lines like, “Her hair is black, her face is pale/ She used to be new wave/ She likes The Cure, Siouxsie and The Banshees, Misfits, 45 Grave.”

I was eager to hear more and not long afterward I picked up The Bottles’ *Not Pretty* EP. The six songs here fleshed out the doomed-but-ain’t-we-having-fun worldview that encased all of their music. Jess always had a way to accent the underlying serious nature behind the fun. On “I Want Problems,” he sounded mournful as he ticked off the kinds of problems he had: “mental, emotional, physical, and legal.” Songs like “Kelly Osbourne” and “Bloody Mary” would have been throwaway joke songs in the hands of too many young men with a guitar in their hands and a smirk on their faces, but Jess managed to give them a desperate edge that caught you off guard. Lines like, “She’s got a lawyer and I think she’s gonna sue/ I have no money and I don’t know what to do,” tell a deeper story than the “I’m in a porn with Kelly Osbourne” chorus. You expect the verses to be nothing more than attempts at lascivious punch lines, but Jess aimed for something more. He usually got it, too.

At the heart of his lyrics you most often found the terse, memorable descriptions of his troubled but meaningful life: “The neighborhood watch is after us,” “I’ll make the couch sound like it’s the place to be,” “We’ll be safe inside of here/ come on let’s run away,” “They said your friends can’t come around because you bring the wrong crowd,” “I’m gonna crawl right up at your door/ I’m gonna fall right through the floor.”

He was a great writer who was criminally overlooked by students and lovers of writing, probably because few of them would look toward modern-day, grimy punk rock bands for inspiration.

When Jess wasn’t playing with The Bottles, he led a colorful offstage life that sometimes caught the eye of local law enforcement. My favorite story involves a cop trying to sue Jess. The cop claimed that Jess’s teeth had cut his hand when the injury occurred while the cop was using his hand as a fist and bashing in Jess’s teeth repeatedly.

I’ve been pouring over the numerous online tributes to Jess as I was trying to decide what I wanted to write about a person I’d never met whose musical legacy deserves to live on. My favorite quote came from an ex-girlfriend named Dani Santi who wrote: “You were always a good friend to me and you were by far the strangest boyfriend I ever had. You will be deeply missed.” I would like to think that Jess would smile at that “strangest boyfriend I ever had.” Punk rockers do want to be missed when we’re gone, but, at the same time, we’ll wear words like “strangest” as a badge of honor.

I will always remember Jess for the great body of music that he and The Bottles left behind. Let’s hope they will inspire another generation of punk rockers coming up behind them. I mean, somebody’s got to keep that damn neighborhood watch in check, you know?

—Chris Peigler



ZINE REVIEWS

Send all zines for review to:
Razorcake,
PO Box 42129, LA, CA.
Please include a postal
address (that's how we trade),
the number of pages, the price,
and whether or not you accept trades.



"If you never
fail to laugh at
a fart or dick
joke, this zine
is for you."

—Garrett Barnwell
DUDES MAGAZINE

ABSENT CAUSE #4, \$3 or trade,
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 84pgs.
The inside front cover invites the
reader to explore the dark side with
this zine, then lists, "underground
cultures, hidden histories, feminist
and queer sexualities, body image,
chosen families, and radical politics,
vampirism...", etc. This issue looks
at surviving abuse. Various writers
submit pieces, art, and poems
on sexual abuse, divorce, and
manipulation. The one article that I
found of particular interest was the
editor's look at rape/revenge movies,
where he starts to get really personal.
It's sort of uncomfortable reading,
which I imagine is part of the intent.
Much like watching a rape/revenge
film is. —M.Avg (PO Box 1568, NY,
NY 10276, redguard@gmail.com)

ASHCAN MAGAZINE #3, \$2 US/\$3
Intl, 8 1/2" x 11", printed, 48 pgs.
A well-written Bay Area centered
zine that was really enjoyable to
read. This issue has interviews with
artists S.A Richard and Scott Hove
and a particularly inspiring article
about Goteblud, a zine archive in San
Francisco—I love the idea of a zine
store. *Ashcan* covers a music scene
that's a little out of my expertise, but
I did run to the internet to hear a few
of the bands that were mentioned. The
article on BART (Bay Area Rapid
Transit) is very well done and not
only pointed out the flaws of BART,
but offered solutions that could serve
a wider portion of the population of
the Bay Area. This is exceptionally
well done for a third issue. —Steve
Hart (Ashcan Magazine, 660 4th St.
#420, SF, CA 94107)

BLACKGUARD #3, \$5,
4 1/4" x 5 1/2", photocopied, 43 pgs.
Yet another excellent zine from
Australia. *Blackguard* is made by
the same guy who makes the curious
Grunted Warning zine I reviewed
a few issues ago. Whereas I didn't
really "get" *Grunted Warning*, I am
happy to report that *Blackguard* is
a straight-ahead comics zine with
some uniformly awesome comic

artists. The zine is thematic in nature
and this issue is apparently the
crime issue. In addition to all the
rad comics and a few short stories,
Blackguard has possibly the largest
zine reviews section I have ever seen
in a zine, as well as one of the nicest
full-color covers I have ever seen
on a publication of any size. Totally
awesome and I don't even consider
myself a comics fan. —Garrett
Barnwell (Stuart Stratu, PO Box 93,
Paddington, NSW 2021, Australia)

DRUG DOGS #2, \$2,
8 1/2" x 11", copied, 36 pgs.
There's a lot of heart in this hardcore
zine, beginning with a story of
breaking out into uncontrollable,
embarrassing air guitar on stage
during a Suicide File show. The Lion
Of Judah interview that follows is a
bit disappointing, but it's not clear
whether that's the interviewer's fault
or the interviewee's. The author
definitely falls into this "So did _____
ever talk about recording with super
famous bands _____?" fandom
territory, but LOJ doesn't really give
much insight to go on. The Spoiler
interview is much better, but where
this zine really shines is the record
reviews. As soon as the author starts
discussing music, the writing becomes
succinct, cogent, and funny. Also,
right in the middle, are two pages of
the author's artwork that are totally
surprising, given that the layout is
choppy and relies on replication
of the same image over and over. I'd
love to see more of that artwork
throughout the zine. Because, despite
the author's lament that zines have
become "bathroom entertainment to
the internet kids who already
know everything," that's essentially
what's been put forth here. If the
best elements could be teased out,
it could be a lot sharper and a lot more
engaging. —Katie Dunne (Dylan, 274
North 500 East #4, Provo, UT, 84606,
drugdogzine@gmail.com)

DUDES MAGAZINE #16, \$2, 8 1/2" x
11", printed with glossy cover, 84 pgs.
This bi-annual zine certainly

isn't lacking in the testosterone
department. In fact, the focus of
the zine is basically all things man.
Heterosexual man. Hockey watching,
beer drinking, bar food eating man.
Luckily I fit the demographic and
had quite a few chuckles whilst
reading issue 16 which includes
articles on dudely topics such as
bowling, boneless chicken wings
and a dude profile on "Papa John"
Schnatter. It takes a while to get
acclimated to some of the St. Louis
dudespeak, but fortunately the issue
came with a glossary so I won't
die wondering what exactly the
word "gingervitis" means (I'm not
telling!) If you never fail to laugh
at a fart or dick joke, this zine is
for you. —Garrett Barnwell (Dudes
Magazine, 3872-A Connecticut St.,
St. Louis, MO 63116)

DUDES MAGAZINE #16, \$2, 8 1/2" x
11", printed with glossy cover, 84 pgs.
"Worldwide Leader of Bathroom
Publications," indeed. This zine
is stuffed with delightful, juvenile
tidbits with titles like "Three Pee
Stories," "Son-of-Obitchuary,"
"Dudely Dude Profile" and "'80s
Dudes with Tudes." If any of that
sounds at all funny to you, I suggest
you read this because it's really well
done. It seems like it was written by
a group of pop punk fratboys who
share slang and like getting wasted
and watching baseball together. It's
remarkable that this was released,
because guys like this rarely get their
shit together to write a magazine.
Such ideas are usually relegated to
drunk talk. Yes, this is ball-scratchin',
fart-lightin' fun, so enjoy, because
complaining about the bro-dawg
level of these guys would be like
fussing about AC/DC being too loud.
—CT Terry (Dudes Magazine World
Headquarters, 3872-A Connecticut
St., St. Louis, MO 63116)

**EMPOWER YR SEXY SELF:
A WORKBOOK**,
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 22 pgs.
On the heels of *Ask First*, her
zine about consent, Cheyenne

Neckmonster has returned to the
subject of positive sexuality. This
one is about sexual identity and
gives advice that everyone could
use to begin to (or further) think
about who they are sexually. It
extends beyond sexual orientation,
which, contrary to popular belief,
is not the only thing that makes up
our sexuality. Cheyenne makes the
point that our sexuality is "how
we perceive ourselves in a sexual
sense." *Empower* presents five
different categories that *get with*
(pun intended) each other to make
up our sexual selves, these are:
sensuality, intimacy, sexual identity,
sexual health and reproduction, and
sexualization. Breaking down each
of these in a way that asks questions
to the reader, it provides the reader
with a jumping off point where they
can start thinking about their own
sexuality and how to own it and
express it. It's non-judgmental and
all-inclusive. By asking the reader
questions to answer *for themselves*,
it overcomes the polemic and
dogmatic ghettos common in radical
sexual thought. Fucking awesome
for awesome fucking. —Craven
Rock (The Wench Collective, PO
Box 2335, Louisville, KY 40201,
neckmonster@gmail.com)

FAILSAFE, £2, 8 1/2" x 11",
printed, 26 pgs.
This is a music fanzine that focuses
on some of the older bands in the
scene like Agent Orange, Instant
Agony, and former Rank And File
guitar player, Alejandro Escovedo.
The interview with Alejandro is kind
of funny, because although he has
over thirteen records since Rank And
File, he was only asked questions
about "the old days." I could feel
his frustration and could tell he
hasn't had much of a connection to
underground punk rock for a long
time, which is fine—he's an excellent
guitar player and can do what he
wants. I haven't read an Agent
Orange interview in a long time and
Mike's enthusiasm for keeping the
band going is infectious. *Failsafe* is

a good read, but there have been a lot of great bands since the early 1980s. —Steve Hart (63 Milton St., Derby, DE223PA, UK)

FASTCORE PHOTOS #1, \$4 ppd., 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 32pgs. Lots of photos of bands like the Cold War Kids, My Chemical Romance, and things of that nature. Just kidding... This is actually a photozine put together by Will Butler, who runs To Live A Lie Records. Every single photo in here was shot in 2010. For a first effort, this is pretty nice. You get one photo each of band, like Acid Reflux, Coke Bust, Devour, Double Negative, Magrudergrind, White Cross, and Thou. The layout is clean and uncluttered, which is important for a photozine. You want the viewer's eyes to rest on the photos and not get distracted

exclusively within a thirteen-mile radius of its home town of Geneva, New York. By doing this, the zine is alert, curious, and thematic. By keeping it local—and dropping the zine off for free all over town—it's also forced them to be honest and dig into complex and contentious issues (like education, trash services, town history, and a home makeover program culturally colonializing their hometown). It's quite telling that in their celebratory issue #13 that they turn the focus on themselves—and they don't come across as PR-people-in-the-making. Doug Reilly and Kevin Dunn are critical thinkers, punk rockers, people you'd invite over for dinner, read about it months later, and then invite them over again. Speaking from the perspective as a longtime interviewer, I admire these two guys' ability to show "regular

JERK STORE #7, \$2, 4 1/4" x 5 1/2", photocopied, 48 pgs. Man, the Australians take their zines seriously. *Jerk Store* is an impressive affair, especially considering that this content-soaked zine is done entirely by one person. This issue features interviews with Arizona's Rumspringer, Canadian hockey punks the Hextalls, and Aussie locals the Arteries, Chilling Winston, and Grim Fandango, along with a buttload of music reviews and a couple of well-placed rants. —Garrett Barnwell (Jerk Store, PO Box 284, Maylands, WA 6931, Australia)

MANUAL DEXTERITY Summer 2010, offset, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 60 pgs. Nice-looking offset zine with a focus on the type of indie rock that Polyvinyl and Lovitt records release — the stuff that the punx dismiss as

makes a comment that more-or-less states: people who dismiss *MRR* as a petty punk bible do so because either their band received a shitty review or they don't actually read the magazine. I tend to agree with her. Very rarely do I encounter someone who's hostile towards the publication that has picked it up in the last five years. They're an easy target for anyone who wants to shoot their mouth off. But there's absolutely nothing in punk that's as massive and encompassing that's still printing, or ever was, for that matter. But if you haven't picked up a copy lately, I highly suggest it. It's still an amazing way to get turned onto great new bands. —Daryl (MRR, PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146-0760)

MEDIA JUNKY #12, Summer 2010, 4 1/4" x 5 1/2", photocopied, 14 pgs.

"The image of a tiny, melted My Little Pony with rat-ted hair, yelling, "Fuck you!" to its abusive, drowning owner will always be hilarious."

—Katie Dunne *SUGAR SUGAR*

by a busy backgrounds. The quality of photos is decent. There are some really good shots of Coke Bust, Capitalist Casualties, Chest Pain (mainly because the singer looks like he is having chest pains), Corrosion Of Conformity, Plague Atake, and Ramming Speed. The subjects are tightly framed; the energy and intensity come across. The cover shot is equally good, with a couple of dudes jumping on each other. There are some shots that could/should have been left out, such as the Bukakke Boys (though a interesting shot, the singer's face and top of head are cut off), and Surroundings (more a picture of a microphone than the band, considering the singer's head and shoulders are cut off), and Negative Approach (shot from behind the drum kit, and no one, other than the crowd, is facing the camera, and the band is just there). I'm not harshing, just giving advice. This is a first time effort, so there's going to be room for improvement that could be dealt with in upcoming issues. I enjoyed looking at this more than a couple times, and will definitely keep this in my collection. —M.Avg (Will Butler, 2825 Van Dyke Ave, Raleigh, NC 27607-7021, fastcorephotos.tolivealie.com)

GENEVA 13 #13, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 60 pgs. *Geneva 13* is the perfect example of a zine lifting up the best of independent publishing. It has an interesting premise of focusing

people" in their own environments. They show proper respect in feature-length interviews, like with the ladies who run the print store that photocopies and binds *Geneva13* in the basement of the local college. They come across as humans—Denise loves the new paper cutter—and the interviewers show a very real kindness and appreciation of not only the ladies' work, but who they are as people. And that's how I feel about *Geneva 13* as a zine. Highest recommendation. —Todd (Geneva 13, PO Box 13, Geneva, NY 14456)

INSIDE ARTZINE #14, \$2, 8 1/2" x 12", offset colored, 44 pgs. Wow. No other word can be used to describe *Inside #14*. This issue is packed full of mind-bending artwork from some of the most twisted imaginations in contemporary art. This German zine refers to the genre of art it highlights as Artscum and if that term doesn't mean anything to you, just use the works of H.R. Giger as a starting reference point. Issue 14 features some amazing works by a global cast, including America's own Jason Felix, Chris Mars, Justin Aerni, and Juan Cabana. This stuff is seriously nightmare-inducing. Also worth noting is the print and paper quality of the zine. Simply put, the only things I've ever seen to match the quality of both in the zine are museum programs or full-on art books. —Garrett Barnwell (Inside Artzine, PO Box 2266, D-54212 Trier, Germany)

bougie but that doesn't get covered on mainstream outlets like Pitchfork. They interview designer Jason Gwenikow, who is responsible for the design-intensive aesthetic of late '90s emo rock groups like The Promise Ring and Cap'n Jazz, and talk to band members and label heads about the importance of packaging and design in the MP3 era. This focus on the things that go into sharing music, as opposed to just the music, is an interesting angle that provides insight into what makes the indie economy tick and makes this magazine singular. —CT Terry (PO Box 1616, Monticello, MN 55362, mandexzine@yahoo.com)

MAXIMUMROCKNROLL #329, \$4, 8 1/2" x 11", newsprint, 128 pgs. Issue 329 arrives chock full of the usual *MRR* goodness including, but not limited to, some top-notch columns, interviews, and reviews. Highlights include the interviews with St. Vitus and England's Cocksparrer and John Fahy's thought-provoking column on modern German fascism, as well as the ever-gritty Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore column. Love it or hate it, *Maximum Rocknroll* is like the *New York Times* of punk rock and this issue again demonstrates why. —Garrett Barnwell (MRR, PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146)

MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL #330, \$4, 8 1/2" x 11", newsprint, 128 pgs. In Carolyn Keddy's review of *We Never Learn* by Eric Davidson, she

A short, half-sized zine-review zine in a sloppy, old-school cut 'n' paste style. All the opinions in the reviews are based on that of one reviewer and that's a nice change, because after you read a few you learn what he's about and whether or not you can trust his opinion. Most of the zines reviewed are in the category that my old zine library used to call "fringe," stuff like extreme politics, anarchism, and conspiracy theory: lots of marginalized voices that are worth hearing out. Even if you don't order this zine, copy down this address and send yours for a review. —Craven Rock (Jason Rodgers, PO Box 8512, Albany, NY 12208)

MUSE, THE NEWS & THE NOOSE, THE, 4 1/4" x 5 1/2", 20 pgs. Three short fiction stories that use humor to provide insight into life. One story proposes the trading of children on a Craigslist type of site, another is about a mouse caught in a drum with a mafia hit, and the last is a letter about a mishap at a water park. All funny and far-fetched, but told in a matter-of-fact, believable way. —CT Terry (John Wawrzaszek, 4839 W. 99th St., Oak Lawn, IL 60453, johnnymisfit@gmail.com)

MY SMALL DAIRY, \$1, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 20 pgs. Delaine is not kidding when she says "Small Diary," especially considering this comic zine covers a three year span ('93-'96). But despite its size, it packs a hilarious punch. Hilarious

because of what she decides to include in this diary: the creepy, the fortuitous, and the mundane, though what's mundane to the reader are tiny victories or failures to the author (e.g. "I slipped and fell on my way to the Blues Explosion concert. I didn't spill my Everclear-Punch"). Each page is filled with slice-of-life frames that don't appear to be connected to each other. But you get a sense of rhythm with each page, an intuitive feeling that the final frame is the bizarre punch line to a subtle joke you weren't expecting. That is where the humor comes from: a surprising, subtle finesse. —Katie Dunne (Delaine, 459 Main St., Ste. 101-263 Trussville, AL 35173, delangel3@hotmail.com)

ONT ROAD #14, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 39 pgs. *Ont Road* is a zine by a British bloke named Luke whose main influence is Kerouac. His main loves in life: traveling and punk. This is the I-went-there-and-did-this type of zine, which is not my favorite medium. However, Luke is a charming, humorous, life-loving young punk. He's actually the perfect punk. One that isn't afraid to offend, yet, doesn't go out of his way to do the anti-PC thing. This definitely spices things up as he gives us his day-by-day rambling adventures. More

importantly, he's pretty loose about what he says about things he sees in America. Here's a quote: "The majority of people on the street were Mexican, and there were many of them at the side of an intersection that seemed to be waiting for some work—the white man's slave." Boldly and spontaneously, with the innocence of a foreigner, he gives us truths that an American would be inhibited to say. I respect his not-sorry, blurring honesty. —Craven Rock (Ont Road Fanzine, 14 Hesse Mount, Leeds, LS6 1EP, UK, skalska@yahoo.com)

PROOF I EXIST #12, \$2 or trade, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", copied, 44 pgs. One man's epic journey from Chicago to Albuquerque. Or to a rural area outside of it, anyway. Billy packs up his dog and his stuff in a Uhaul and hits the road. This issue's a relatively quick read—he almost runs out of gas on the way there, suffers some existential crisis in a Trader Joe's, finds a place to live, and buys a truck. It's all pretty straightforward. He seems like a nice guy, and I'm certainly no one to talk about writing boring zines, but just a little bit more pizzazz, whether in the writing or layout department, would have been nice. —Keith Rosson (Billy, 318C Frost Rd., Sandia Park, NM 87047)

SUGAR SUGAR, \$?, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 16 pgs. Very sweet personal zine about experiencing Halloween as a teenager with a little sister in the '90s. That might not be everyone's thing. I didn't think it would be mine until I read about three pages into it. In this zine, Snieder's writing can lean a little bit towards the college essay style, but it cannot hide the guttural yet wickedly clever sense of humor underneath. The image of a tiny, melted My Little Pony with ratted hair, yelling, "Fuck you!" to its abusive, drowning owner will always be hilarious. Maybe that is a girl thing. —Katie Dunne (Cassie J. Snieder, PO Box 4156 Austin, TX 78765, cassiejsneider@yahoo.com)

THREE DAYS OF MY LIFE I WILL NEVER GET BACK, 1 € or trade, 4 1/4" x 5 1/2", photocopied, 18 pgs. In 2010, I'd like to lay down the gauntlet to all zine punks and entreat you: Please, please, please, if you can, don't take the Greyhound for more than a couple hundred miles if you can help it. With a little pre-planning, you can get to your destination faster and cheaper. Leave the romance of the trip to when you arrive and keep the bus for your last resort. That said, Steve Larder (some of you may know him from such hits as the author of the always-

excellent *Rum Lad* and the illustrator of the Razorcake cover with The Brokedowns), an Englishman found out two things the hard way. 1.) How fuckin' big America is, even from Baton Rouge to Portland, Oregon. 2.) How dreadfully slow and torture-y Greyhound is. But Steve's got that knack. Even while in the uncomfortably seated, rolling water board of diesel and broken America(ns), Steve come across as an affable, compassionate guy, taking lumps, quietly ruminating, having conversations, smelling smells, and ultimately enduring a bad decision without sounding like a crybaby or without trying to twist the journey into something epic. *Three Days...* is a recommended one-off from an undeniably talented zinester. —Todd (stevejipwit@hotmail.com)

TIEBREAKER #1, \$3 US/\$4 Int., 7" x 4 1/4", copied, 76 pgs. Pretty nice work for someone who hasn't done a zine in around five years. Themed loosely around the notion of domestic terrorism and how it's defined and formed by governmental policy, the media, and the court system, *Tiebreaker*'s a pretty dense read. The initial piece, mostly focusing on the hypocrisy inherent in specifically targeting "ecoterrorists," comes across as a little dry, though Lynch is on the



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NEW ON HANDSOME DAN

NO PROBLEM YOUR EYES EP 7"

No Problem is the new band from Wednesday Night Heroes vocalist Graeme McKinnon, and boy does it ever deliver. This record fucking rules. Razorcake says: "Hardcore punk that's as tuneful as it is blazing." We agree!



SHEGLANK'D SHOULDERS FLEXI 7"

The final two songs by Canada's kings of skaterock finally see the light of day, on a flexi-disc no less! Limited to 200 copies, hand-numbered covers, this thing will surely sell out quick so get on it! Fans of JFA, D.I. and The Faction take note.

OUT NEXT:

SPASTIC PANTHERS/TEENAGE RAMPAGE split 7"

SLATES "Unbun" 7"

NO PROBLEM "Paranoid Times" 7"



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INFO@HANDSOMEDANRECORDS.COM

ball enough to spice up the layout with plenty of visuals and break up the material with shorter pieces. Also includes how-to's on guerrilla theater, "10 Ways to Be Labeled a Terrorist" (which includes, um, attending vegan potlucks and even *organizing* protests before they actually get started), and lengthy interviews regarding jailed activists. There are also plenty of additional reading lists, and the majority of information is sourced. Again, it's dense material, but Lynch clearly put a ton of effort into it and it's recommended to those interested in learning more about radicalism and America's domestic War on Terror, much of which seems to focus on ecological activism. —Keith Rosson (E. Chris Lynch, PO Box 171, Bloomington, IN 47402)

UGLY CUTIE / FLUFFER \$1, 4 1/4" x 5 1/2", copied, 20/16 pgs. Two small zines full of line drawings of elongated people cramming things into their mouths: giant slices of cake, their own hands, sex partners distended penises... There's also

a step-by-step gutting of a teddy bear and girls with paper bags over their heads dancing. Why not, right? —CT Terry (Kaitlin K. c/o Billy the Bunny, 318C Frost Rd., Sandia Park, NM 87047)

UPHEAVAL #13, \$4, 11" x 8 1/2", copied, 34 pgs. Mixed bag with this one—I *want* to like it a lot more than I do. To his credit, it's abundantly clear that Crusty Craig's brimming with enthusiasm for hardcore and punk, and he does a hell of a lot of work here exposing us punks in the States to a lot of international bands. The layout, while sloppy, clearly took some time. (There's an extensive review section here. It actually makes up most of the zine, and the guy took the time to Xerox and include every single band's logo in their respective review.) And judging from his intro, the guy's faced some definite adversity in regards to putting out the zine. In that regard, kudos. Still, the writing is rough around the edges to say the least. It's riddled with typos, repetitive, and generally

coming across as first, quick drafts. An email interview with Indonesia's Hellowar, Boston's Malazar, and the guy from Slimy Cunt And The Fist Fucks espousing lame one-liner clichés didn't do much to salvage this issue. Worth it if you're into getting exposed to some non-U.S. hardcore bands, but the aesthetic and writing itself has a lot of room for improvement. —Keith Rosson (upheaval.fanzine@gmail.com)

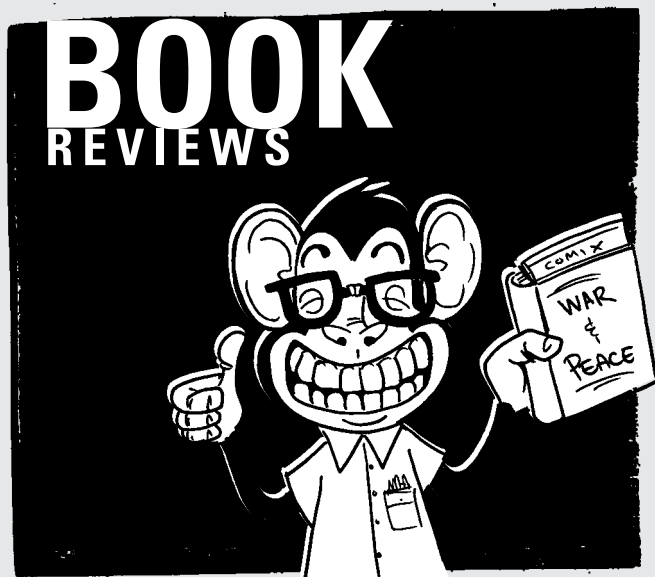
WAIT 5 MINUTES, IT WILL CHANGE, \$2, 4" x 11", copied, 28 pgs. Juxtaposes occupying a physical space and a physical body. Investigates transgressions of boundaries between liminal spaces. Really interesting transition from an account of living as a trans person to a white, class privileged volunteer working on New Orleans hurricane relief. Very self aware. It was a little hard to get into at first because the two subjects threw me, the metaphors were reaching a bit, and the pieces didn't seem to be connected. But the further I

read, the more I saw connections and started to understand this was a carefully crafted zine. —Katie Dunne (Lewis Wallace, 1435 W. Sherwin Ave. #3 Chicago, IL 60626, lewispants@gmail.com)

ZINE KIDS GO TO COPY TOWN, THE, #2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 28 pgs. A choose-your-own-adventure story about two zinesters trying to write and copy a zine in time to bring it to the Chicago Zine Fest. It's written in that relatable and general second-person style of the choose-your-own-adventure books of your youth. The writing is funny and the situations are just broad enough that anyone who has tried to steal copies can relate. Cool idea, good execution. —CT Terry (Billy the Bunny, 318C Frost Rd., Sandia Park, NM 87047)



1,558 more zine reviews can be read at www.razorcake.org



Children of the Sun

By Max Schaefer, 391 pgs.

Children of the Sun is a riveting affair that, much like its main character, Nicky Crane, a closeted homosexual who was also a reputed neo-Nazi skinhead, succeeds at being two things at once. The book is one part fictional account of James, a gay writer living in London, researching Crane and gradually becoming obsessed with him. The other part is a scrapbook of actual press clippings and fliers detailing the rise and fall of the contemptuous neo-Nazi movement in England, with Crane and notorious racist skinhead band, Skrewdriver being featured heavily. Max Schaefer transports the reader through time, going from the ugly, gritty violence of Crane's heyday in the late 1970s to James' life as a young writer immersing himself in the paradox of Nicky Crane in modern times. Schaefer's vividly descriptive style of writing lends itself to a compelling work of fiction, and the history lesson, while focused on inarguably the ugliest youth and music movement in recent history, is eye opening as well. —Andy Conway (Soft Skull Press, softskull.com)

Cleft, The

By Dick Wegmans, 222 pgs., \$7

When I received my package of things to review from Razorcake, I was excited to pull out a book. So-called "alternative" fiction isn't the easiest thing to find on Maui, seeing how all of our independent book stores have closed down. This is also the first time I've ever read a book about an asscrack that features prominently in low-waisted pants and skirts that are popular nowadays. According to the protagonist, the asscrack, or cleft, is the holy grail and we follow him into the dirty underbelly of whorehouses in Mexico while he pursues his sexual proclivities (any more than that and I'd give away the plot).

The Cleft is well written, and moves quickly. However, while reading, I usually try to find a character who is compelling in some way, a character who I could relate to, but most of the characters are repulsive. I found it difficult to hope that they would get out of the predicaments that they found themselves in. In fact, I hoped that a few characters would just die and go away. I also didn't think it was necessary to drop random n-bombs in the dialogue. It certainly didn't heighten the quality of the dialogue. Instead, they just jumped off the page and distracted me from the story.

Despite this, *The Cleft* is a daring book—even disgusting at times—but it's also very difficult to put down. The book itself is also handmade. —Steve Hart (Mulnix, PO Box 29753, LA, CA, 90027, wospress@gmail.com)

Destroy All Movies!!!: The Complete Guide to Punks on Film

Edited by Zack Carlson & Bryan Connolly, 463 pgs.

Hoooo-leeee-crap! From the moment I heard that this book was coming out, I was freaking out about it. I swear this thing was tailor-made for me. Punk rock and movies are among the most important things in my life, so a book that explores the intersection of the two is simply mind-blowing in my little world.

Well, here it is and consider my mind blown! The work that has gone into this thing is nothing short of colossal! Think about it. How many punks in film can you think of? Sure, the core classics come to mine right off the bat. *Class of 1984*, *Suburbia*, *Decline of Western Civilization*, *Sid and Nancy*, *Return of the Living Dead*... The editors here have written up thousands of films. Thousands. Movies from all over the world. If a movie had a punk rocker in it—no matter how factually incorrect that punker may be—these guys have found it, watched it, and reviewed it.

The book itself is beautiful with lots of color pages with posters and stills from many of the movies. There are interviews with many of the directors, producers, actors, and punk rockers involved. There seems to be no end in sight to the encyclopedic knowledge of punks on film that this book spews forth.

Being a bit of a geek when it comes to both punk and movies, I do have a couple of nit picky things, but nothing too serious. The work that they put

in on this thing is enough to give them a pass on some of the few things I disagree with.

This is the kind of book that I can obsess over forever and ever. Thanks guys! —Ty Stranglehold (Fantagraphics Books 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115)

Destroy All Movies!!!: The Complete Guide to Punks on Film

Edited by Zack Carlson & Bryan Connolly, 463 pgs.

In the age of vertical media integration, rock music in movies is more prevalent to the point of being a nuisance. All too often, a mediocre soundtrack is poorly woven into a narrative for the sake of cross promotion. Nowadays, there are bands that don't seem to exist outside of the closing credits of youth culture-oriented films. But there was a time when a few in-the-know directors and a handful of rogue filmmakers began exposing punk rock in cinema.

Destroy All Movies!!!: The Complete Guide to Punks on Film acts as a guide to depictions of punk rockers in movies from the late '70s to the late '90s. It is an excellent piece of research compiled over seven years. Through interviews with leading actors and filmmakers and thoughtful scene descriptions, the book establishes a body of work including over a thousand films where punk rockers are either depicted or misinterpreted.

The more prominent films are given the full treatment, including interviews

up in their little psychedelic clown outfits and made them dance around. That's another topic for another time.

For those of you who, until now, have skipped over reviews of Brad Warner's books because, seeing the word "Zen," you envisioned candles and bubble bath, at best, or some patchouli-stinking hippy love-turd, at worst, let me quickly bring you up to speed. That way, the rest of this review might make a little more sense.

Back in the '80s, Warner played bass in a Cleveland hardcore band called Zero Defex. After the band broke up, he went to Japan to study Buddhism with a teacher named Nishijima who taught a version of Soto Zen that is heavily imbued with the philosophical insights of a thirteenth century monk named Dogen. Nishijima installed in Warner a deep and unwavering faith in the practice of sitting meditation known as "zazen." Warner was eventually ordained and in 2003 put out a book called *Hardcore Zen* wherein he showed that, contrary to popular belief, Zen is *not* the intellectual property of the hippies and new agers, and that there actually is a surprisingly strong connection between punk and Zen. He then proceeded to write more books and somewhere between his second and third book he began contributing his brand of Hardcore Zen in column form to the softcore porn peek-a-boo website known as *Suicide Girls*. In the process he has made his Porno-Punk Zen a cottage industry and has built himself up into a sort of trash-talking "Hulk Dogen," taking on pencil-necked challengers

"Warner takes his zazen-pumped pythons to the task of grappling with the subjects of sex and sin, and does so displaying a matronly sensibleness ala Dr. Ruth Westheimer along with the pop-culture-soaked snarkiness of someone like Dan Savage."

—Aphid Peewit *SEX, SIN, AND ZEN*

and summaries establishing a hierarchy of punk rock movies. Pages are dedicated to some of the more renowned classics like Penelope Spheeris's seminal documentary *The Decline of Western Civilization*, Alan Arkush's Ramones vehicle *Rock 'n' Roll High School*, and Dan O'Bannon's punk zombie classic *The Return of the Living Dead*. Carlson and Connolly have compiled an astounding array of interviews with the major and peripheral players in these films.

But more than just a rundown of all the important movies, the attention given to the smaller entries creates a profile for how people of a certain mindset watch for themselves in the movies. A dissenter might not see the connection between films like the ones mentioned above and characters like Dynamo, the operatic killer in Paul Michael Glaser's film adaptation of Stephen King's short story *The Running Man*, or extras in the background at an art opening in Martin Scorsese's segment in the short film collection *New York Stories*. Regardless of a character's literal connection with an actual music scene, my ears would generally perk up at the slightest rumble of a punker, or a ridiculous representation thereof, appearing in a film during the years before punk rock became a mainstream phenomenon.

It is the minutiae of this book that makes it such a rich piece of work. More than just a guide to the best and the worst, the book distinguishes the performers and characterizations that inserted a bit of anarchy into cinema and embodies how fans perceived those films. —Billups Allen (Fantagraphics, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115)

Sex, Sin, & Zen

By Brad Warner, 304 pgs.

The Japanese word "Zen" (like the Chinese word "Tao"), has been co-opted by so many slime merchants and marketers lately that when you see the word now, you're likely to think of a garbage-scow's-worth of products meant to soothe and pamper both body and soul. Everything from lotions, incense sticks and hand soaps, to air fresheners, and for all I know, feminine hygiene products and baby wipes. Basically, the product peddlers have manhandled this calm-sounding foreign word to the point that, when you see it adorning their various products, you'll slip into a slight trance and become awash in a transcendent vision of all things Gentle, Peaceful, Sublime. And that tends to loosen the materialistic clutch you have on your wallet.

And I'm not even going get into how, back in the '60s, those damn hippies looted Zen and various other noble traditions of Asian thought and dressed them

from the rival Rinzaï sect and using his dreaded shikantaza leg-lock to get spiritual heels like Dennis Gempo Merzel and Andrew Cohen to tap out in utter humiliation. In that regard, he has much in common with *Guruphilic's* Jody Radzik, who flamboyantly thumps deserving villains in the world of Hindu-based non-duality.

Hulk Dogen has also managed, along the way, to make many prissy Zen nerds blanch at what they perceive to be his *Beavis & Butthead*-level toilet humor and his tendency to call other Buddhists who don't agree with his Dogen-core Zen, things like "Ass Clowns" and "Butt Buddies."

Sex, Sin & Zen is Warner's fourth book and it picks up on some of the sex and morality topics from his previous book, *Zen Wrapped in Karma Dipped in Chocolate*, expanding on them and scrutinizing them even more closely with his keen Right Dharma Eyeballs. Given Warner's notoriety in the Buddhist community at large as an enfant terrible, I have to say I'm a little disappointed in his titular choice for the book. A book about sex is, in itself, enough to make a great many Zennies flinch uneasily on their zafus, but why not take the opportunity to make a boldly "immature" move and give it a title that not only thumbs its snotty nose at requisite Buddhist decorum, but also irreverently skewers a beloved classic in the canon of American Zen? For example, a title like *Zen Flesh*, *Zen Boners* would've been much better than the dryly bland *Sex, Sin & Zen*, in my opinion.

But the staid title is about the only thing about the book that I found disappointing. As the title so plainly indicates, Warner takes his zazen-pumped pythons to the task of grappling with the subjects of sex and sin, and does so displaying a matronly sensibleness ala Dr. Ruth Westheimer along with the pop-culture-soaked snarkiness of someone like Dan Savage. But as deftly as Warner manages to work the levers of sex and zen, he is likely to find himself, once again, embroiled in controversy. There are, no doubt, many precept-minded Buddhists who will see Warner's technique of using the subject of masturbation, for example, to discuss the essential Buddhist concept of anatman or non-self as untoward, if not downright heterodox. But if sex can be used as sort of means of conveyance to bring Zen's lofty concepts to frontal lobes of the masses, then why not? Appealing to people's prurient urges, in this case, is just shrewd business.

And speaking of prurient interests, one of the highlights of *SS&Z* for me was an interview Warner conducts with porn veteran Nina Hartley, discussing everything from pornography and polyamory to her Buddhist upbringing. Not only does Ms. Hartley have what I would call a "nicely decorated skeleton" (as

the Zen pervert Ikkyu might say,) but she's also smart as a whip. Any woman who's not only an expert and enthusiastic fellatist, but is also conversant in psychology and Buddhist philosophy, gets a "fully erect" rating from me, to borrow *Hustler* magazine's old rating system.

In the past I've occasionally twitted Warner for being overtly doctrinaire, a sort of ventriloquist dummy for old Dogen's ghost. And I've criticized him for implying that zazen is the one and only path to true enlightenment. I still think Warner's message, if not Warner himself, would benefit from a course or two in general semantics. But I'm encouraged by his admission in the second chapter of the book where he admits that he has "somewhat idiosyncratic views" and what he says does not go for "all, or even most, Zen people."

I have also been tripped up at times by Warner's propping up of, or reifying, certain concepts, like cause and effect, to name just one. But that usually coincides with my having temporarily lost touch with the fact that his books are largely aimed at the general public and, therefore, deal in provisional teachings, in keeping with what the Tibetan Buddhists call the First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma.

So Brad Warner's steamy new "sex book" has arrived, as promised. The reactions are bound to be strong and varied. Is he in earnest and to be taken at face value—in other words, is he truly and sincerely shining badly-needed light on the endarkened subject of Buddhist views of sex? Maybe. Or would it be more accurate to say that this book is something of a Trojan horse for Buddhist ideas, utilizing a slyly effective technique whereby we have Zen wrapped in Sex and dipped in Titillation? Could be. Or is Warner merely grabbing yet another teat on the Zen Cash Cow, putting a pasty on it, and milking it for as many book sales as he can get out of it? Anything's possible.

Even if, at its core, it's little more than a pro-zazen tract slathered in pink sex frosting, *Sex, Sin & Zen* is a smart, entertaining, and smart-ass read, like all of Warner's books. And if nothing else, the guy should get kudos for extricating poor old Gotama Buddha from the gaping maw of the voracious new age beast.

And if nothing else, maybe this book will seal Warner's position as reigning Sex Guru. Ever since the rascal sage known as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (aka: Osho) went up in a puff of nitrous oxide years ago, the title of "Sex Guru" has been floating around out there, unclaimed. I ask you: is there anyone in the spiritual biz more qualified than the Porno Buddhist to fill Rajneesh's diamond-encrusted shoes?

If Warner's last two books are any indication, the "hardcore" in his *Hardcore Zen*, seems less related to *Hardcore Punk* now and more related to *Hardcore Porn*. And that's fine by me. If nothing else it probably sells way more books and, whether you think it's tawdry or not, it *is* disseminating the iconoclastic ideas of the Buddha. Now I'd just like to see Warner grow a big cheesy porn mustache just to complete the effect. And while he's busy growing that out, I'm going to be trying to find out if Nina Hartley really is a practicing polyamorist or not. —Aphid Peewit (New World Library, 14 Pamaron Way, Novato, CA, 94949, newworldlibrary.com)

We Never Learn: The Gunk Punk Undergut, 1988-2001

By Eric Davidson, 351 pgs.

I remember back in 1994 when I first moved to Victoria, I quickly attached myself to the local university radio station. Punk rock was taking the mainstream faster than you could blink your eyes. I was looking for something dirtier and what I found was the *Cheapo Crypt Sampler* from Crypt Records. It was raw, trashy punk like I had never heard before. The band in particular that swept me up was New Bomb Turks.

It is more than fitting that the Turks' frontman Eric Davidson would be the one to chronicle the bands that made up that scene. He was there front and center, out on tour, and playing with most of the band in the book. A firsthand account is refreshing in music history types of books.

As for the tome itself, it's well written and chock full of information and wacky stories. I found myself more than excited at the prospect of reading more about some of my favorites like The Mummies, Devil Dogs, and the Candy Snatchers and I wasn't let down. He also manages to throw some New Bomb Turks history into the mix without the book becoming an autobiography. Neat trick!

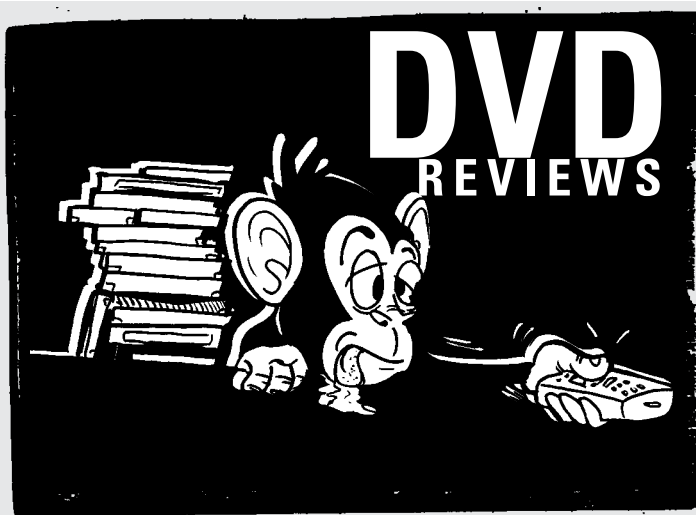
The only thing I thought was missing was a little more of what was going on in Canada at the time, but perhaps that's ripe for the picking for someone else's book. I'll continue to enjoy this here book many more times. Having The Spits on the cover is pretty fuckin' rad, too! —Ty Stranglehold (Backbeat Books 777 West Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee, WI 533213)

Why Be Something That You're Not: Detroit Hardcore 1979-1985

By Tony Rettman, 240 pgs.

After being slighted in the *American Hardcore* book and movie, Detroit hardcore is finally getting its due with the publication of Tony Rettman's *Why Be Something That You're Not: Detroit Hardcore 1979-1985*. The book covers the bands, the scenesters, and the record label that arguably helped to define hardcore by documenting what was happening musically around the Detroit area. Despite only basically covering a handful of bands and characters, Rettman does a masterful job of weaving a compelling tale by letting the participants tell their stories in their own words. Members of the Fix, Negative Approach, the Necros, and the Meatmen, along with others, recount what was happening in such a way that the book is hard to put down. This book actually makes a nice companion to *Touch And Go: The Complete Hardcore Punk Zine '79-'83* that came out a few months ago, as it helps to place some context to some of the material presented in that book. The book is also filled with photos, flyers, and other ephemera that make the book pretty essential for anyone who is a fan of the above-mentioned bands. —Garrett Barnwell (Revelation Records Publishing, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615)

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Colin: DVD

What's up with all the undead in popular media as of late? You'd have to have been hibernating in a coffin to have not recognized the overwhelming popularity of the vampire movie over the last few years. During this time, the zombie flick has always been the also ran. But, it seems that with the recent popularity of AMC's *The Walking Dead*, the zombie movie is set to become the new rage.

Enter *Colin*, a little film from the U.K. with plenty of chills despite its lack of budget and casting of total unknowns. Apparently, writer and director Marc Price created the film with a budget of seventy-five dollars, which is beyond unheard of. Consider that Kevin Smith's *Clerks* cost about \$30,000 to make and you will marvel while watching this.

In a nutshell, *Colin* tells the now-familiar tale of a mysterious zombie outbreak in which our protagonist Colin is bitten and infected. Everything you've ever seen in a zombie movie is now turned on its ear. For the first time, we witness the story from the zombie's perspective instead of the living hero's. This is pretty bleak fare, for sure. Easily one of the more harrowing scenes involves Colin's sister not wanting to give up on him despite his undead status. Blood is thicker than water, right? Well, ol' sis gets bitten for her troubles and you probably know the rest of the story.

The only real problem I had with the film was with the low light levels that director Price shot in. There were fairly large sections of the movie that were literally invisible, perhaps intentionally? In any case, the poor lighting did contribute to the overall moodiness of the film, so I guess it worked on some level. This is totally recommended for fans of the genre. It's nice to see that there are some filmmakers who are thinking outside the box while choosing to work with a potentially tired theme. —Garrett Barnwell (colinmovie.com)

Loren Cass: DVD

This bleak purgatorial nightmare of a film gazes like a drooling catatonic at the lives of several twenty-somethings as they fight and fuck and get fucked-up in the aftermath of the St. Petersburg, Florida riots of 1996. Like an episode of the *Twilight Zone* where almost all the parents and authority figures are strangely

missing—as if vaporized by a neutron bomb that spares everyone under the age of thirty—*Loren Cass* follows the disaffected youth as they numbly try to cope with the reality that they are little more than societal detritus. In this way, *Loren Cass* is bound to be compared to roughly similar urban/suburban-dystopia films like *Suburbia* and *Kids*. The main difference between this film and those is that the people here are gutted and hanging like bodies in Ed Gein's shack—except these bodies still have heads, sputtering with dim desires and animalistic urges.

Filmmaker Chris Fuller keeps a steady grip on the somber proceedings and doesn't allow any forays into surrealism or black humor, such as you find in similarly bleak offerings like *Eraserhead* and *Gummo*. And for me that's unfortunate because it ultimately results in film that's flat for long stretches, with minimalistic dialog that blows by every so often like a lone tumbleweed down a desolate road. These stretches of nothing-really-happening are interrupted throughout the film with sudden flourishes of violent action, where the half-embalmed void-droids lurch to life... dead quiet streets erupt in contextless fights with assailants spilling from abruptly stopped cars and swarming some hapless nobody like crazed jackals, fists making dumb meat sounds as they pound into flesh.

This film, with its blood-trickle slow pace, leaves all sorts of open, unframed psychological space for the viewer to negotiate. That's both the beauty and potential flaw of *Loren Cass*. While the viewer is definitely not being led around by the hand, the thematic scaffolding that holds the various scenes together is so sparse that it's all too easy to find yourself reading something into what you're seeing, in an attempt to fill in the blanks. Not that that is necessarily a bad thing. But I personally could have used more jarring scenes like my favorite in the film, where the skinhead character is sitting in an easy chair, staring blankly at a TV set, and suddenly ignites into a curious case of spontaneous human combustion.

Graphic footage of R. Budd Dwyer blowing the spaghetti out his head with a gun and footage from a Leftover Crack show also provided some of the movie's more interesting moments. Maybe more than any other aspect of the movie, I thought the scattered bits of disembodied dialog, provided by people like Keith Morris and Blag Dahlia, were the most intriguing—particularly a snippet of Charles Bukowski talking about “children dying in the trees,” which added a welcome bit of poetry to the film. But all in all, it was an unblinking survey of a fetid, nihilistic landscape with very little of anything stirring. There are plenty of

flavors of “bleak” to choose from these days, but *Loren Cass* just isn't the one for me. —Aphid Peewit (kino.com)

Widower, The: DVD

Milton Smythe (Shawn Milsted) is distraught over the death of his wife; so distraught, that he can't bring himself to tell anyone she has died. As he begins to lose his marbles, he drags the corpse around town in an attempt to relive the glory years of his marriage. His nosy neighbor is on to him, but Smythe is able to get away with his bizarre behavior primarily due to two cops who are more concerned with snacking than doing their jobs. Director Marcus Rogers utilizes an exceptional vocabulary of tasteful shots while constructing this narrative, and the shooting elevates the pace of this obviously low budget picture. The camerawork saves some of the more languishing scenes and the campy tone of the film is reflected nicely in the color scheme of the set designs and costumes. There are also some cleverly conceived fantasy sequences thrown in.

The primary problem with the pacing of the story is the amateurish acting. In a film like this, a stand out or two can really save the film. It weighs hard on my conscience to lay a movie like this on the performers, but even some poor acting with a little more energy might have pushed this story into another realm. For a film about a guy tearing up the town with his dead wife, the performances are just too muted. There are small roles pushing in and out of the story that occasionally raise a chuckle, but Smythe as the protagonist is not a very compelling character. Putting the weight of acting like an old man on an inexperienced actor is an odd choice. There are times when it seems Milsted could be pulling off the character if he didn't have to attempt to look feeble. Also problematic is the makeup meant to make Smythe look like an old man is also wholly unconvincing under the scrutiny of the amount of time he spends on camera.

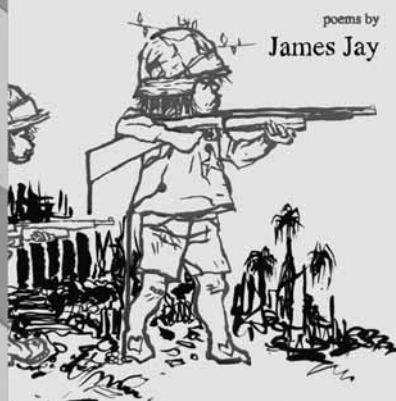
The DVD from Alternative Tentacles includes a disc of the soundtrack, which features solid tracks from punk and lounge bands that underscore scenes. With some technical proficiency and a decent soundtrack pushing the story along, the movie still manages to be tedious. But Rogers has good ideas and knows how to swing a camera. Although it drags a little too often, *The Widower* is not without its charm. —Billups Allen (Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, SF, CA 94141)

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